CUL-H05942-49-KP3838

Mainstream

OL XXXV No 33 July 26,1997 Rs 7

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EDITORIAL

Shift the Focus

KP 3838

The ruling United Front at the Centre is not just a rudderless ship with the constituents trying to steer the coalition in different directions, the Front members are also threatening each other with dire consequences in case their respective viewpoints are not allowed to prevail within the combination It is of minor significance if this spectacle subjects the Front to public ridicule What worries any well-meaning Indian most is the impact of such a situation on the country's global image And the fact that in the process the prestige of our Prime Minister has also suffered severe, if not irreparable, damage is a matter of profound regret precisely because dispassionate observers did not, even in the recent past, bracket him with today's thick-skinned run-of-the-mill politician whose distinctive features include engagement in various forms of corrupt practices (which have become so commonplace in the current 'globalised' criminalised polity that they seldom evoke legitimate outrage in society)

Not that there has been any specific charge corruption—minor or major—against Gujral as person But there is not a shadow of doubt that is being viewed, in the public perception, as one wh by casting a Nelson's eye on corruption of me proportions of none other than the redoubtable Lal Prasad Yadav tried to shield the beleaguered Bih CM His belated denunciation of corrupt politic cannot possibly hide the truth that he failed to firm deal with Laloo Prasad once the State Govern sanctioned the CBI to chargesheet the Chief Minist in the multicrore fodder scam Gujral should hav as the country's PM, unhesitatingly called Laloo bluff by asking him to resign from the office of t head of the Bihar Government, making it clear th in case of the latter's refusal to do so he himse would step down from the post of the Prime Minist Such a principled stand would have overnight turne him into a national figure commanding allroun respect and esteem, one who would not, come wh may, compromise on principles Instead, by h prevarications Gujral is now in an unenviab defensive position having permitted Laloo on on side and his detractors in the UF—Deve Gowd Harkishan Singh Surjeet and Mulayam Singh Yadav—on the other to gain the upper hand He has himse to blame for the present crisis which could have bee defused by his timely and firm handling of the Lalo phenomenon The result Gujral too has come to b identified with the average politician of the day, kee on somehow retaining *sans* principles the covet post he was able to secure not by dint of mass appe charisma or authority but through a conspiracy circumstances

But what about the other leaders of the UF? A of them without exception (barring perhaps Jyo Basu, Madhu Dandavate and Indrajit Gupta wh remain outside the day-to-day murky political event in which such a distinguished personality as Surjee enjoys wallowing) are playing their own games M Karunanidhi, the DMK leader and Tamil Nadu C now trying his level best to defend Laloo, is involve in the same exercise His compromise formula m appear to be a clever move to preserve the Fro

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unity in the wake of the problem created by the RJD's emergence on the political horizon but that it is a premium on corruption does not bear elucidation How the Front can accept this without loss of face—despite the DMK ally CPI's latest acrobatics on the issue—is a moot question But then anything is possible in politics And is it really that difficult for the likes of Deve Gowda, Surjeet and Mulayam to cohabit with Laloo? For none of them was ever known to be an uncompromising campaigner against corruption, their images having long been tarnished by numerous allegations of petty and medium-sized, if not large-scale, corruption

While the leaders running the government in New Delhi and the ruling Central coalition continue to squabble—and the Congress stalwarts touch the lower depths in opportunist politics (as was clearly seen during the voting on the confidence motion the Laloo Government moved in the Bihar Assembly)—the BJP is steadily inching towards its avowed objective Whatever the quality and magnitude of the public response to L K Advani's *swarna jayanti rath yatra,* there can be no two opinions that the principal Opposition party in the country is striving its best to advertise and market itself as an organisation capable of providing better governance in the days ahead, and not without success There is undoubtedly a strong logic against allowing the *Hindutva* protagonists to capture power at the Centre, but this logic is gradually getting eroded in the face of the UF's own "achievements" The irony of the situation is that it is the secular and anti-BJP forces represented in the UF and the Congress who are paving the way for the BJP's triumph in the next general elections which, according to latest trends, are likely to take place within a few months time

In this suffocating atmosphere the revulsion against corruption, voiced by veteran leaders of the stature of C Subramaniam at the recent meeting of the national committee set up to observe the golden jubilee of India's independence, has come as a whiff of fresh air It has brought with it the hope of generating a true crusade against the scourge regardless of the desperate attempts by vested interests to perpetuate the menace and thus weaken the country's integrity

But that in itself is not enough Simultaneous with that crusade there must be a real intervention by individuals and mass movements—outside the pale of electoral politics—so that beyond the sordid goings-on in the corridors of power issues affecting the people's lives and livelihood get priority For example, the courageous struggle being waged by the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan in Rajasthan to ensure right to information with regard to the use or misuse of development funds warrants active support from all those concerned with people's welfare It is such struggles which need to be highlighted and sustained instead of giving undue prominence to the burlesque being enacted by the Gujrals, the Laloos, the Gowdas, the Surjeets and the Mulayams The earlier that drama is consigned to oblivion the better would it be for the nation as a whole

What is imperative is to shift the focus of national attention to the concerted efforts underway—far from the glare of media publicity—to uplift the country from the morass to which it has sunk of late In this context it is also pertinent to underline that the country expects much from its first Dalit President (the symbolism inherent in the Dalit accession to power should not be last sight of even if the person in question happens to be a universally recognised scholar and statesman of such eminence as K R Narayanan)

(49)

July 23 S C

ALTERNATIVE ECONOMIC SURVEY–1996-97

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Price Rs 50 (India), $ 5 (Foreign)

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Why Stability is the Watchword for Chinese Leaders

BATUK VORA

The euphoria of the Hong Kong takeover is over Anti-China lobbies in Hong Kong have more or less tied up a band on their mouth, lest the Chinese Government pounce on them

Taiwan is next on agenda soon after the Macao island joins the mainland in 1999 Nobody. would understand why then the Chinese leadership incessantly harps on the slogan of stability, making it a watchword as never before, what forces and factors they think were out to create instability, and why they want it as a rallying cry

China-scholars would immediately come out with the usual explanation saying that the leadership wanted to instil the fear of instability among the people so as to carry on its design to perpetrate one party authoritarian rule

But the question does not really sound so simple Deng Xiaoping has gone Peng Zhen has also departed, he was the first victim of the Cultural Revolution and was a former Mayor of Beijing Transfer of power to the "third generation" is a *fait accompli* and unlikely to be challenged by a few live veterans And yet the position of the present team of leadership, under the all-powerful 'core' leader, Jiang Zemin, does not seem to be as secure as it should have been

In a 'will' purportedly drawn up by later Deng Xiaoping and now doing the rounds overseas among some Western Sinophiles, Deng expressed his regret for having used the Army to crush the Tienanmann Square rally of students and workers in 1989, killing more than 300 of them (media reports)

It is also believed by some Western scholars (like Jean Phillipe Beja of *China Perspectives*) that Zhao Zyang, the dismissed reformer leader during the 1989 events, had taken Deng to task in a letter for his "autocratic and personal exercise of power" and for his dismissal of another reformer leader, Hu Yaobang

Zhao Zyang is alive and said to be keeping a close tab on the current leadership's policies in Beijing The Communist Party of China is preparing for its Fifteenth Congress next September and those who are insiders say that Jiang Zemin fixed the timing of this Party Congress so close after the Hong Kong takeover in order to consolidate his power

◆

In their 'obsessive concern' for stability and convinced that Western powers and Taiwanese separatists were bent upon sabotaging the stability and turning Hong Kong into a key element in their "China containment" policy, the Chinese leaders have decided to beef up their law and order apparatus

Over the last few months, the newly-appointed Hong Kong chief executive, Tung Chee-hwa, has undertaken an exercise to make the Public Order Ordinance and the Societies Ordinance more restrictive His amendments mean to reinstate "draconian laws" which imposed strict restrictions on public demonstrations and protest movements At the same time Tung assured his people that his laws would not harm the freedom as such

One of the provisions in this ordinance bans political parties in the Hong Kong territory to receive any foreign fund This is considered "serious" by Western lobbies Obviously, China's confrontation with former colonial powers is not yet over Hong Kong's 'democratic' elements can hardly do anything without cash help from their Western patrons

Domestically, more serious problems haunting the leadership without any solution, are unemployment, workers' discontent against lack of protection of their basic rights, differences within the camp of intellectuals over the question of further political and economic reforms, sick public sector, etc

As it happens, since the end of 1990s, the years of "catching up" with the West, have slowed down On the one hand, some social categories are being hit directly by the social changes resulting from the reforms over 45s, especially women, are being increasingly laid-off in state and collective enterprises in the cities, privatisation of the social welfare system, housing and education now affects all classes of city dwellers, and modernisation of agriculture has thrown tens of millions of peasants onto the labour market, where they are now seeking jobs in industry and services

◆

AGAINST the background of rampant corruption in the state and the party, some social categories have been benefiting from growth Recent research on the development of civil society in China has shown that there seems to be a tentative move towards a state that attempts to "incorporate" and coopt new social categories (often in the form of associations), or to transform the communist organisations to address new issues raised by reforms

But the same research stresses the fact that the party-state still has the greatest difficulty in moving away from the usual negotiation circuits inside the bureaucracy, which are characteristic of a communist state

Recently a book written by one [illegible]ang Wen, supposedly the pen-name of one of those in the know of the red hot Peking City corruption scandal, which had hit the headlines after the suicide committed by Wang Baosen, the city's Vice-Mayor in 1995, came out in the Chinese language A circular issued by the Communist Party banned the book for "revealing state secrets" It feeds the discontent that a section of masses may be feeling about the leadership and is considered a "bad influence on cadre morale as well" Written as a thriller the book pits a clean element against the obnoxious offspring of the business and political elite who are flush with cash, more like mafia godfathers than honest cadres of the Communist Party

Altogether, the situation remains placid on the surface but seething with various unsolved problems and also discontent among a vast section of the people Therefore, it is not surprising to find the use of the word "stability" as a shibboleth ■

Raisi[illegible]ll's New Tenant

[illegible] CHAKRAVARTTY

By the time these lines reach the reader, India will be having a new President who, according to the Constitution, is due to hold office for five years, that is, beyond the present millennium That the choice has been widely welcomed is borne out by the fact that all the major national parties supported Narayanan's candidature, while rumbustious who contested him lost his deposit One has to thank God for that because most of what Seshan has handled so far has ended up in inane controversy, and the country can ill afford to have a Head of State at the moment who specialises in creating controversies rather than smoothening them

One of the Election Commissioners, perhaps absentmindedly, had suggested free voting—that is, without any party whip—in the Presidential election The question could have been discussed had it been raised in advance However, the actual results of the election have clearly shown that Narayanan was way ahead of his rival in the fray, and that a ban on party whips in this particular election would have made no difference whatsoever in the ultimate results of the ballot box counting

If there were good reasons why Seshan scored so poorly, there were equally good reasons why so many of the parliamentarians voted so enthusiastically for Narayanan, irrespective of the badge he was wearing or the colour of his political complexion In a word, it can be said without any fear of contradiction that Narayanan has been the nation's choice for the august post cutting across party barriers This by itself is an important political feature of the present Presidential election At a time when most of the national political parties have been passing through acute strain in retaining their integrity—some even faced with the prospect of losing their identity—it is significant that in choosing the Head of State, the Members of Parliament—who constitute the electoral college for such a poll have cut across party barriers to choose one who has been widely known for his outlook and views and yet has kept himself out of petty political positions which divide more than unite the country at today's critical juncture

From this point of view, Narayanan's victory is invested with an importance which can hardly be ignored It means that despite the frightening fragmentation in political parties and the dwindling attachment to principles and values in politics today, there is an overwhelmingly large number of people in the public life of this country who cherish moral values that are emphatically proclaimed by the election of K R Narayanan as the President of India His election is a repudiation of petty politics and seeks out a wider national vista

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By our Constitution, the President does not lead the government, but he does have the right in his personal capacity to express his views to the Prime Minister and hold on to them irrespective of the stand of the government This is made clear by the record of the last five decades Our first President held strong views on social and economic issues which hardly tallied with those of the government of the day There were frank, and sometimes tense, exchanges on these issues between the President and the Prime Minister There were items of personal difference between the two in the subsequent years, but as the Constitution enjoined it the Prime Minister's views prevailed as those of the government However, despite this disability, there is no doubt that the President's personal views on occasions did carry weight Indira Gandhi, as the leader of the Congress, was found to be short-sighted in choosing yes-men for the office of the President It is yet to be assessed if she did the right thing in choosing a copycat President in the critical time of the Emergency, or by selecting a thoroughly partisan one which led to the disastrous policy of the Bluestar and ultimately to the tragedy of her own assassination There are good reasons to speculate that had there been other personalities then occupying the seat of the Head of State, perhaps the Prime Minister at the time might have been personally persuaded to desist from the disasters in which she landed herself and the country at those crucial moments

It is not that the office of the President does not think or is divested of any authority An alert and sagacious President can certainly leave an impact on the government of the day Had there been a different way of thinking in the Rashtrapati Bhavan in 1975, it is doubtful if the Emergency had been imposed at all The total disarray in government thinking in 1984 led to the Bluestar, a catastrophe from which it would take long to recover One of the reasons why such speculations are warranted today was that the government over which the Prime Minister presided in 1975 and 1984 could not really be called genuinely Cabinet, but that of an individual ensconced in a ring of unscrupulous coteries That was precisely why a Presidential advice, even if personally conveyed, might have had a really chastening effect

Leaving aside speculation, one has to take into account the fact that the constitutional vagaries might create a situation when the President has to take his own decision without the benefit of any Prime Ministerial advice This happened under President Venkataraman when he had to decide on his own that in the absence of any party getting the majority in the Lok Sabha, the one with the largest strength in the House should be called to form the government and try to prove his majority in the Lok Sabha President Venkataraman, in fact, added a valuable precedent which his successor, President Shankar Dayal Sharma, could follow without question

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K R N[illegible] becomes the Rashtrapati at a very critical [illegible] Indian democracy as structured by the Constitution of India Not only is there the question of any party lacking majority in the Lok Sabha, the prospect of new forms of tension between the Centre and the States, the dissonance over Article 356, the inability to sort out the river water disputes—these and many other issues may find the government of the day in a confused state and the President through his understanding and integrity may help to bring a solution Even a case as created by Laloo Prasad Yadav could ensure a constitutional crisis in which the President would have to play his part, with wisdom and sagacity that may help to bring about a solution which will enrich the very Constitution itself

As the imposing red-sandstone building on the Raisina Hill welcomes a new occupant, fortified by the Constitution of India, distant drums of discord shall call for all the wisdom and strength to help the elected representatives do their part In a country as vast and diverse, in which corruption has come up like canker in public life, a country which has yet to combat poverty for the millions that inhabit its earth—for such a country there should never be a person at the helm who could be just a bystander The crisis itself demands a new form of moral-activism That is the mandate with which K R Narayanan assumes the new office, the most momentous in his active public life ■

Mainstream *joins the country in warmly felicitating Vice-President Kocheril Raman Narayanan for his record-breaking victory in the Presidential election and elevation to the highest office of our land. While doing so we publish the following article based on the speech Narayanan delivered on the occasion of giving away the Marcony International Fellowship Award (Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi, January 20, 1997) to bring out his attitude to the communication revolution, underlying which is his concern for the betterment of the society as a whole.*

—Editor

Harnessing Communication Revolution

K R NARAYANAN

The revolution in communication and information technology has today transformed the world into an intimate neighbourhood. It has made it possible for us to communicate not only with ourselves, but with distant planets and the stars, and maybe one day with the dim past and the unknown future. In view of these fantastic facts and possibilities we look upon the men and women of science and technology with awe and wonder. It has been said science which has destroyed many a god and goddess has itself assumed the pose of a god. That makes one ask the question: what is the aim of science—to add amenities to man's life on earth, to improve and maybe to perfect his physique, to put in his hands new and wonderful tools, to make his mind and intelligence more luminous or is the aim to create artificial intelligence and artificial life, to mimic the inimitable nature and to recreate creation itself? Einstein once asked:

> Why does applied science, which is so magnificent and makes life easier, bring us so little happiness?

He answered the question himself and said:

> The simple answer is that we have not yet learned to make proper use of it.

That means we must have a use in mind, use to society, use to humanity while we embark upon the applications of science.

Science and technology has brought immense benefits to mankind. India's Scientific Policy Resolution, drafted by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru himself in 1958, said:

> Science has led to growth and diffusion of culture to an extent never possible before. It has not only radically altered man's material environment, but what is of still deeper significance, it has produced new tools of thought and has extended man's mental horizon. It has thus influenced even the basic values of life, and given to civilisation a new vitality and a new dynamism. It is only through scientific approach and method and the use of scientific knowledge, that reasonable material and cultural amenities and services can be provided for every member of the community.

The Resolution further said that

India's enormous resources of manpower can only become an asset in the modern world when trained and educated.

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FOLLOWING the vision of Nehru India has made considerable progress in science and technology including in communication and information technology. The great Indian experiment in collaboration with NASA, two decades ago, was a landmark event described by one of the Marconi Fellows, Arthur C. Clarke, as the greatest communication experiment in history. The telephone is one of the basic units of the communication system be it electronic mail, computer communication, or the Internet. The installed base of working telephones in India is just 10 to 12 million and our telephone density is less than one for every 100 people as against the world average of about 10 for every 100 people. That is why India has now adopted a far-reaching new Telecom policy. One important innovation has been the development of small electronic exchanges by C-DOT which can operate in the hot, humid and dusty atmosphere of our small towns and villages. This has opened up a new world of information and connectivity in our countryside. Community facilities for communication should receive the highest priority in the context of the conditions of India along with information facilities to educational institutions, libraries, etc. New information technologies can help the spread of education and culture, for supporting health services and warn the people about impending natural disasters and efficiently organise relief and provide succour.

India has still a long way to go before it can jo the information highway, not to speak of the ne developments taking place in the world tod People are talking about integrated optoelectro and even bio-chips. Man may be able to pr machines which are not only clever, but even wise We hear about computers that can play music or chess Computers may be able to do all this, but it is pointed out they cannot enjoy music or a game of chess The dividing line between the machine and human being is that the human being is a feeling machine, an emotional machine, or a machine moved by moral impulses What science can do therefore is to make the human being more clever, capable and wise and life more beautiful and meaningful than to create artificial intelligence and artificial life The artificial intelligence should be developed to help and better human intelligence and life and not to displace the human being

Today communication and information technology has reached the zenith of development with still greater heights to climb. The radio, the TV, the satellites, the computer, the Internet are all there for instant and intimate communication But what do these communicate, and what is there to communicate? There is a tremendous lot to communicate But this marvellous media is in fact overcrowded with violence, terror, smut, falsehoods, half-truth, misinformation and propaganda Most of this magnificent and marvellous apparatus of communication does not seem to know what message to convey to humanity In the olden days of primitive technology people used to travel on their two legs or on horseback or on slow-moving ships But consider some of the great ideas, spiritual, religious and even scientific ideas they carried with them and which remain in the hearts and minds of people even today, sometimes with new vitality after many transformations and revolutions in history Thus while I applaud with awe and wonder the marvellous information technologies the genius of man has developed and I want these technologies for my country in the fullest measure, I cannot but ask with the poet. "Where is the knowledge lost in information —where is the wisdom lost in knowledge?" ■

Construction Industry and Human Rights

S G VOMBATKERE

Human Rights (HR) is always and issue whenever any individual or social activity is involved Indeed HR is the largest single issue that affects our lives, since all activities of all individuals, communities, societies and nations are for and on account of individuals, communities, societies and nations Life in general is all about satisfying HR and in the satisfaction thereof, affecting the HR of others

The growth of civilisation and their downfall and extinction are all finally based on HR—their satisfaction, their upholding, and their violation, their definition, their codification as law, their dissemination So also the rise and downfall of monarchs, empires, states, and nations The examples are Fascist Germany and Italy under Hitler and Mussolini respectively, the British Empire and ndependent India, and most recently, the Soviet on

General S G Vombatkere retired from military October 1996 He holds a Ph D degree in ngineering He is settled in Mysore where n social work

HR as a "mega-issue" in the overall sense, needs to be viewed for convenience from the angle of large spheres of activity for better understanding of the specific issues involved In India, two of the largest spheres are agriculture and the construction industry (CI); this article attempts to bring out the interplay between the CI and HR both within the CI, as well as due to the work and the results of the CI which is the spearhead of development according to the current model

Introduction

THE branch of engineering known as civil engineering was so named some two centuries ago in order to distinguish it from military engineering which was already rather well established Civil engineering at that time encompassed all branches of applied science, and mechanical and electrical engineering came into being in their own right as distinct branches later This is mentioned to emphasise that civil engineering [which is the bedrock of the construction industry (CI)] is a fundamental branch upon which even today, all other branches of engineering are dependent, since infrastructure is created by civil engineering.

The inputs to the construction industry (CI) are civil engineering knowledge, experience and design, building materials, trademen's skills, manual labour, and more recently, finance, machines and petroleum fuel. The outputs and results of the CI are infrastructure for the establishment, maintenance and growth of other industries, and employment and housing for people. The inputs and the outputs of the CI remain the same whether it concerns the Taj Mahal or the Egyptian pyramids, the skyscrapers of Japan or the USA, or the simple two-bedroom dwelling, the mighty river dams, space vehicle launching pads, oil-drilling off-shore rigs, long-span bridges or simple culverts on village roads. The CI is thus engaged in the broad areas of infrastructure, industry, housing, business and service.

With 50 per cent of Plan outlay and 21 million construction workers, the CI is the largest industry in India, employing the largest number of people countrywide, making HR an issue *within* the CI. It is also the most important developmental activity affecting (beneficially as well as adversely) every individual in the country. In the current model of development, the CI, the transportation industry, and the energy industry are the "Big Three" of development. Thus, HR is also an issue *because of* the CI.

Being an industry which directly or indirectly touches the life of every individual in a very fundamental manner, the CI is the essence of what planners term as "development". The crux of the matter inasmuch as HR is concerned, is the fact that public benefit from development has taken a poor second place, while legitimate profit to contractors as well as illegitimate profit to politicians, bureaucrats and engineers, takes the unabashed place of pride as the driving force of the CI. It is, therefore, not surprising that the proponents of mega-projects are those who make profit from the execution of the projects. Those who suffer due to the ill-effects of the construction and after the completion of the projects, and those who benefit from the complete project are different categories of people.

Development and HR

DEVELOPMENT is said to be undertaken in order to improve the quality of life of people in general. That is, development is a process (it is neither a goal nor a solution[1]) which should enhance and uphold the HR of individuals, groups and communities. In the current model of development (which is the so-called trickle-down model) the highly centralised command and control organisation has a great role to play. In this context, centralisation of planning (and consequently little or no people-participation in the planning process) leads to plans being conceived, formulated and launched by powerful, wealthy, influential city dwellers. These people have little or no truly relevant ground knowledge of what rural and poor urban people need, or desire for raising their quality of life (*not*, it must be emphasised, their standard of living). This is true especially since the vast majority of India's population live in villages/rural areas and are predominantly agriculture-based. The planners in fact, claim to know what is good for others without consulting them. In a democracy, this is a failure of the planning process, and is indeed the starting point of infringement of HR. True, it is not possible to consult every citizen, but every project which immediately and directly affects people, while promising to deliver benefits to others, needs to be given wide and truthful publicity, and publicly debated *before* making financial or contractual commitments or starting the work. As an example, we have the Narmada Project which was conceived decades ago but was never publicly debated nor given timely publicity until after financial commitments were made, contracts concluded, and even work commenced. This is not to say that there are no benefits from this project, but it is worthwhile to pause and think whether the beneficiaries are the same groups as those who are being displaced, and whether the same benefit could have been achieved at less cost, with less displacement of population, and with longer project life. Or whether the beneficiaries should have been the dam oustees themselves directly, rather than the relatively prosperous downstream farmers.

It is no secret that the more prosperous sections become even more prosperous at the cost of the poor, the illiterate, and the unorganised masses (the silent majority), leading to a widening prosperity gap, social unrest, political turmoil, and terrorism. The HR of people who are forcibly displaced ostensibly for the greater good, do not figure in the benefit-cost calculations in the Planning Commission simply because they are not quantifiable, and because it is in any case inconvenient to fit "lazy" and "fractious" tribals and backward people into neat economic theories imbibed in London or Harvard.

The foregoing is with respect to the area of infrastructural projects, and examples demonstrating the same thrust of centralised planning on HR of populations can be quoted in the fields of nuclear power (Narora), defence (missile ranges in Orissa), electric power generation (Enron, Cogentrix and Tehri) and others

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WE may now examine the activities of the CI with respect to HR in the industry Construction of factories also leads to displacement of people but not to the extent that happens with infrastructural projects However, with industries, the main problems are pollution of air-water-soil, and the negative effect on the social system Pollution is a problem whether the factory is located in an urban, suburban or rural area, and the recent Supreme Court ruling on the closure or move of polluting factories in Delhi speaks volumes However, the move of a factory will only relocate the pollution, while closure will mean unemployment of factory hands Thus, the orders of the Apex Court are only at the fringe of the problem The real problem is one of HR whether the right to live a life free from noise pollution and air-water-soil pollution is indeed an HR, and whether the setting up of the factory in the first instance was itself an infringement of HR of neighbourhood residents even if it gave employment to some people who improved their own standard of living (buying TVs, clothes, motorcycles, etc) at the cost of the quality of life of everybody including themselves (by pollution and attendant health problems)

There is also a negative effect on the social system of hitherto self-sufficient or economically independent communities due to the industrial model of development The land surveyor, the revenue official and the engineer are the first to arrive on the scene in an "undeveloped" or "backward" area, so named even if the people have a stable and operating social system These city educated people give false or no information to local inhabitants and acquire land by making cash payments to simple farmers or other rural folk, with promises of employment and material "goodies" The social system which is based primarily on land and the produce of the land, gets its mortal blow from this land acquisition The CI then moves in, and the destruction of the social system is complete It may be argued that the whole world is changing in a similar manner, and hence the social system of small communities must not be held sacrosanct This argument is not entirely invalid, but it does not address the twin issues of HR and democracy While the standard of living of some section of the hitherto independent community undoubtedly rises, the accompanying reduction in the quality of life of everybody in general is the direct result of industrial development Unskilled or illiterate persons may find employment as labour within the CI but they are doomed to years of monotonous toil in unhealthy surroundings, possibly far from their native place The years of independence and security in their social system albeit with hard agricultural or other work, becomes a thing of the past It should be a sobering thought that the present author and also probably the reader, are among the more successful of second or third generation refugees of the industrial invasion of mainland India's villages where there existed a working social system No doubt the social systems of yesteryears had their distortions and iniquities, but they had a good measure of security and independence Today's industrialised social systems have little or no security, are dependent upon big money and/or a mafia, and have their own set of distortions and iniquities Briefly, the people are worse off in general with industrialisation possible only with the involvement of the CI

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ROAD and railway construction are important civil engineering activities Both these open up hinterland areas to the thrust of industrial development Since tourism has been named as an industry (in order to obtain certain financial benefits as a means to encourage it), roads into forest areas serve to build hotels and lodges inside the forest where communities are living independently in relative isolation The influx of tourists is a disturbance (even though they come for a few days each, others come to replace those who leave) to the inhabitants, but more serious is the permanent settlement of supporting infrastructural staff with their families The way of life of tribal society changes irreversibly It is usually argued that people who wish to preserve tribal culture are selfish or are romanticising the tribal life of "poverty", and not wishing tribal people to "progress" This is incorrect since their argument is based on their own definitions of "poverty" (meaning cash incomes) and "progress" (meaning availability of consumer durables) Tribals with little or no cash income who are forced to break with their way of life in a closely knit society, finally get no better cash incomes while they lose their social security and their self-respect in city slums

Their Human Development Index (HDI) plummets and they become refugees of one sort or another, reduced to beggary and/or criminal activities

Take the example of Nagarhole Sanctuary in Karnataka Without the government having consulted the local tribal population, sanction was accorded to the Taj Hotel Group to construct a hotel inside the forest to promote tourism The hotel group being solely profit-oriented, started construction without any heed to the social and economic interests of the tribal people, in violation of their HR Should the hotel indeed finally start functioning later, the tribals, hitherto independent, will be forced by circumstance to move to towns and cities to populate already overcrowded slums and, with unemployment, have to choose between starvation and joining the ranks of begging/criminal organisations It is to the credit of the tribal people of Nagarhole that they have respect for the rule of law, and have approached Courts of Justice to claim their rights against the actions of the hotel group

The Konkan Railway Project makes travel between Mumbai and Mangalore substantially quicker and cheaper (whenever it is commissioned) for people of Mumbai and Mangalore and for others enroute who may need to travel However, the resistance to the project encountered in Goa and elsewhere is indicative of the effect of the CI on the rights, claims and interests of communities and societies It is significant that the industrial giant DuPont aided by the Government of India, had to abandon their nylon industrial plant in Goa because the local people did not want it there, and had the gumption to enforce it

Many more examples can be cited from recent times both in India and abroad, where the industrial engine spearheaded by the CI had ridden roughshod over the rights, claims, interests and sensibilities of people Yet, at the other end, the CI also includes house construction which provides houses to people, though even this is not without its serious side-effects For example, the present author's modest house is constructed on land acquired by a Urban Development Authority, land which once supported an agricultural community, whose members are today landless, dispersed, without roots, unemployed, and poorer Some are working as domestic servants, all have lost their self-respect as farmers, howsoever "poor"

The CI needs land for roads, railways, housing, dams, airports, etc When land is acquired from private individuals, compensation is assessed or negotiated and paid When government land is required, the matter is not so straightforward for the construction agency It would shock nobody if it was stated that the cost of the land as assessed by the government is often less than the cost of getting the land released for construction But more importantly, the land itself, even if designated as wasteland, is *common land* (including forests) which is used by local people for grazing or other such non-industrial uses which economists do not recognise as productive The takeover of common land by the CI is thus a common loss to the local people, only a very few of whom may be compensated by jobs or other means to economic upward mobility Even if job or upward mobility is magically provided to all the erstwhile users of common lands, it can never compensate for the social and environmental damage caused by the takeover and end use of the land by the CI Thus almost every acquisition of common lands ends as a violation of HR of one set of people in an effort to satisfy the economic aspirations of another set of people In a nutshell, it is a transference of wealth according to an economic policy termed as "development"

Construction projects must satisfy certain benefit-cost ratios if they are to commence This is true of projects both in the public and in the private sector A little thought will reveal that this applies even for an individual constructing his own small dwelling, though in this case no formal calculation is made The benefit which may accrue from a complete project and the cost of completion are quantified in terms of money Many approximations are made and many rules of thumb are applied where actual expenditure saved (benefit) or incurred (cost) cannot be quantified, since the parameters are intangible or are based on the design assumptions of the project Thus the benefit-cost ratio can be (and often is) manipulated by the engineer or administrator in order to get the project sanctioned Human cost is quantified only in terms of cost of rehabilitation/resettlement, neglecting the fact that rehabilitation/resettlement involves social disruption due to physical displacement, and loss of employment due to change of location and/or vocation Planners fail to appreciate that movement of people is much more difficult than movement of, say, concrete, because people have to resettle themselves while concrete settles well wherever it is placed

Those who remain unsettled after displacement often turn to employment as labourers or as domestic servants Or else they resettle themselves by means of the begging bowl or taking to petty or organised crime These negative effects when subtracted from the benefit of the project (or added to its cost) will provide a much more realistic benefit-cost ratio, based upon which many projects may never get sanctioned

Within the Construction Industry

THE usual "scene" at a construction site, is of a dusty area with lines of labourers headloading stone aggregates and sand or mixed cement concrete from mounds of building material or a concrete mixer Stacks of bricks, moving vehicles, noise and dust, infants playing on sand heaps while their mothers work, and crude shacks for site offices and maybe for labourers to live in, completes the picture in the case of small projects (The bulk of the projects are small, and there are 21 million construction workers all over India) In many cases, minor children are also seen working

It is not necessary to emphasise that the working and living conditions of construction workers are in general, exploitative. The workers are themselves often from amongst those who had to leave their native places and traditional vocations due to the pressures of industrialisation The main issues which are violative of human rights are merely listed here and not amplified as they have been dealt with in detail elsewhere.

(a) Equal wages for equal work with regard to female workers
(b) Employment of minor children
(c) Lack of creches
(d) Sub-standard living conditions
(e) Provision of toilets and bathing facilities especially for women
(f) Assured drinking water supply
(g) Risk and accident at site, and insurance for workers
(h) Minimum wages and provident fund for workers

It is sufficient to mention that HR are routinely violated within the CI mainly because construction workers are unorganised. Productivity is closely linked with the satisfaction of HR by means of better working and living conditions This aspect is not receiving enough attention within the CI

Mechanisation and Labour

GREATER mechanisation reduces the requirement of labour It can also improve the quality of construction, and speed up the pace of construction when meticulously planned However, mechanisation throws construction workers out of employment Except in certain specific situations which are rare, construction work is not undertaken for the purpose of providing employment, in the current ambience it only happens to provide employment to many millions Benefit may accrue to those workers who remain employed after mechanisation But there are serious disbenefits to those who lose employment since they are not trained nor possess skills which may get them employment in some other vocation

The notion that workers' productivity increases with increased mechanisation is faulty The fact is that while the work output per capita may increase, it must be seen that the work output refers to the numbers who have remained in employment, and does not count those whose services were replaced by machines Of course, for an individual employer or a particular project, there is really no other way to assess productivity Yet, when taking an overview of the CI, this aspect needs to be recognised as it concerns the welfare and rights of human beings An employer who claims that he is undertaking mechanisation in order to save hard manual work and drudgery of the labour force, has not got the overall picture

Conclusion

THE CI is the agency which implements mega-plans and mega-projects for development, conceived within an increasingly centralised system of planning and execution The current model of development prescribes a path of "trickle-down" economics by which immediate (even if small) benefits of large populations is subordinated to mega-size immediate benefit to the few who control power, alongwith promises of benefits to the population in the future

The present article attempts to expose the more undesirable side-effects of construction activity Development is meant to benefit people, and hence any step by which HR are violated or diminished needs to be given serious rethinking The CI has moved ahead technically and managerially by leaps and bounds in post-independence India, but the results are apparent for all to see For real, people-oriented national progress from the bottom upward (just like any structure constructed from the foundation upward), it should be the role of engineers and administrators to influence those in power to plan projects which will enhance HR and quality of life of the common man rather than diminish them in any manner The CI has the capability to be the instrument of a socially-just change which alone can benefit people without degrading the environment or causing ecological damage ■

Consumerism and Decline of the Public Realm

MUKUL ASTHANA

While standing at the gateway of the modern consumerist world and ready to enter it perhaps with the dawn of the twentyfirst century we Indians should pause for a moment to reflect on its nature and tendencies which are undoubtedly destructive to the public realm The dazzling world of consumer durables blinds us to the fact that in pursuing our ever expanding desires we are edging towards a new world of thraldom Every act of the fulfilment of our desires distorts our essential nature and drives us to compulsive activity to possess and dominate things. Anxiety, tension and aggression are the eventual outcome of such activity

Little do we realise that in multiplying and enhancing our needs which themselves are false and artificial we are unwittingly allowing ourselves to become a victim of an elaborate but invisible system of power which structures our wants The consequences are both—immoral and irrational Immoral because it creates in men a frenzy of greed and envy, and irrational because for some dubious advantages in the present men are forced to pay a greater price in future for degrading the environment and damaging the ecology Dialectically speaking, a consumer society generates its own contradictions The manner in which it presently tries to contain them does not hold out the hope that it will be successful The moral protest against this society which is derived from the ancient concept of man and value system will remain valid for all time to come No amount of cosmetic surgery will be able to erase the moral ugliness of this society

A consumer society necessarily produces a consumerist culture Laws and bodies proliferate to promote and protect the interests of the consumers We are asked to cultivate consumer-consciounesss, that is, to be aware of our rights as a consumer. On the other hand, the industries placed as they are in cut-throat competition indulge in a most aggressive marketing of their goods through the advertising media which very often targets the basest instincts in man It is truly a buyer and seller world in which the relation between them is 'I-It' from both the sides A cash-nexus devoid of any human significance binds them together

Too much emphasis on consumerism is dangerous for a healthy political society The world of the consumer is a private world It does not extend beyond his family (Most of the products advertised on TV show the images of a nuclear family using or enjoying the products together, be it a toothpaste or a soap) It is characterised by private desires and wishes In the solitariness of his own world the consumer is always busy in calculating his gains and losses only in terms of material and mundane things Then there occurs an inversion of moral values For example, for a merchant honesty is just a policy, an art of earning the goodwill of the consumers And for the consumer, the right to freedom narrows down to the right to choose the goods and services he likes The more the craze for consumer goods, the more they acquire a fetishistic character and ultimately the relation between man and thing becomes a 'social' relationship

The value system of modernity was already available to the consumer to philosophically back up his increasing withdrawal into the private world of his own Modernity is an offspring at once of the Enlightenment and the Romantic movement The former gave us the conception of man as an atomised individual, and the latter taught us to concentrate on our inner self to actualise the potentialities hidden in our nature The self-seeking and self-centred consumer is the direct descendant of the self-absorbed modern man. Apart from eroding the traditional values and breaking up the communal ties, this led the man away from the wider sources of meaning and moral significance

While the private realm of the philosopher or the monk does not restrict the growth of the public realm (there is opposition without clash), the private world of the consumer is most certainly inimical to the public world Market is the only point of contact with the public world for the consumer But, strictly speaking, market is not a part of the public realm It is the underworld of the public world It was not for nothing that in ancient times the political world was kept free from the world of commerce, and economics was treated as subordinate to politics which in turn was subordinated to ethics Politics and ethics did coincide at several points but

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Liberalism which once upon a time maintained a positive link between free market and free polity no longer inspires us There never was such a link The argument was fallacious both from the point of view of history and analysis In the Europe of fifteenth and sixteenth centuries free markets had developed not freely but under the benign protection of royal governments The "merchant adventurer" was supported by kings in his commercial exploits and he, in his turn, backed the royal absolutism. A free market is, in fact, a non-existent ideal condition for no market is free from the manipulators who operate on the sly Free polity depends on free political space in which speaking and acting men meet to share their words and deeds

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CONSUMERISM is the biggest factor which has contributed to the decline of the public realm in recent times It has replaced the citizen by the consumer Once the autonomy of the consumer is accepted it becomes difficult to retain the sovereignty of the citizen A sovereign citizen is an active participant in the life of the *polis* He has a string of rights and duties which is meaningful only in the public realm Above all, he retains his dignity (*dignitas*) only because he is a member of a civic society (*civitas*) Man as a consumer of things is fit to live only in a 'market society' not in a political society From a consumer of things he inevitably turns into a consumer of government

The entrepreneur model of politician and the consumer model of citizen are undoubtedly against the spirit of participatory democracy For here, democratic government is a partnership between the ruler and the ruled who stand on an equal footing. It is a joint venture to achieve goals of common good To think that the right to the consumer to choose the goods and services and the right of the citizen to choose his government are the same is to miss the point that in the former one is acting only for oneself but in the latter one is acting only for oneself but for others as well Responsibility to others is morally far greater than responsibility to one's own self. Our choice of government affects the children, the old and the infirm, the patients in mental asylums and several other sections of people who do not vote Thus while the act of choosing the goods has only very limited consequences, the act of choosing a government produces a series of far-reaching consequences which cannot be fully anticipated in the present

A consumer society moves forward by continuall discrediting its own standards of consumer comfor A product launched today is outdated tomorro This society must always break its links with th past. Past is a shackle to progress The consume seduced to be a participant in the daily revolutio too begins to enjoy the 'pleasures' of an unmediate existence in the privacy of family life Unlike th consumer society, the political society advances i future by firmly holding on to its past That is wh tradition play a very substantial role in the sphe of politics It provides an anchor so that progres may not be derailed and lose direction It saves th citizens from drifting away to the unknown shore of the ocean of politics

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THE amazing advances in technology have led som of us to hope that the ideals of participato democracy can be achieved by just pressing a butto on the keyboard of a computer Without steppin out of their houses the citizens will be able to ele their representatives and constitute the governmen They will also be able to register their opinion f or against a bill directly in the legislative assembl Though this has not been asserted, the underlyi assumption is that the distinction between t citizen and the consumer will be finally obliterate A good consumer will also be a good citizen at t same time just as a good citizen was identical wi a good man for Plato.

The theoretical possibility of such a developme is not denied but it shall thoroughly privatise t public world and ultimately lead to its destructio A public realm without speech and action inconceivable It is managed not by the techniqu or engineering skills of a technocrat but by the a of the statesman In a participatory democracy consensus is reached not through the mechani operation of cause and effect but through t dialectic of competing opinions differently express in words and reflected in deeds but united in vie of common goals and purposes

To return to the era which we have closed behi us is just not possible We cannot dismantle t entire structure and institutions of the mode society Such quixotry should not be attempte What is suggested is that we should not g primacy to the consumer within us but to the citiz that we are A spiritual and intellectual life ultimately for more satisfying than a merely mate or biological life

INTERVIEW

Netaji's U-Boat Journey : An Aide's Account

MADAN GOPAL

Abid Hasan Safrani, a student of engineering in wartime Berlin, was among the scores of Indians working in the Free India Centre set up by Subhas Chandra Bose on his arrival in Germany in 1941 When the Indian Legion was formed he joined it and saw it grow from 15 to 4000 In his capacity as a member of the Centre and of the Indian Legion he came so close to Bose that the latter asked him to accompany him, the only other Indian, in the submarine from Germany to the Far East. He was among those who saw him off at Saigon for the "destination unknown
After independence Safrani returned to India and settled down at Hyderabad where in December 1975 Madan Gopal, a veteran print and electronic media expert (who has written over 50 books in English, Hindi and Urdu, his book— Origin and Development of Hindi-Urdu Literature*—having been a pioneering venture in English), was the Director of Field Publicity in the Government of India He interviewed Safrani for two of his books on Netaji Safrani, who is now no more, spoke to him mostly in Hindi-Urdu, and a copy of the tape is now with the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi The account of Netaji's journey in the submarine, and Abid Hasan's life with him is very fascinating In this year of the centenary of the birth of Netaji, it would be of great interest to millions of Subhas Chandra Bose's admirers to get an idea of how Netaji worked and lived in those fateful war years Because of constraints of space the questions put to him have been condensed Following are the excerpts of the interview* —Editor

Madan Gopal I would like to know what transpired at your first meeting with Subhas Chandra Bose, after his arrival in Berlin

Abid Hasan My meeting with Netaji was one of the most memorable events of my life When Netaji arrived in Berlin he had established contact with his close friend Swami. And it was Swami who told me of the arrival in Berlin of one Orlando Matsoatta, and that they had decided to organise a military force from out of the Indian prisoners-of-war in Italy I said this was a foolish idea to organise such a force and told him to ignore this Italian's plans But Swami was so insistent that I agreed to meet this Italian friend of his.

I was then ushered into the presence of Orlando Matsoatta He sat in the corner of a large room As soon as I saw him, I immediately recognised Netaji whom I had met in Germany in the pre-war years I could not believe my eyes I don't even remember whether or not or how I greeted him He got up from his seat, came forward and hugged me. He took me to sit by his side and ordered some tea All this while I was staring at him, just stunned and speechless It took me about fifteen minutes to regain my composure

"You know all about the war," said Netaji "What do you think we should do? I am told you have been a Congressman " He asked me what I thought of the Indian situation It was like Gandhiji or Jawaharlal asking me about the Indian situation What could I say? Then he asked me about my background, what and where I had studied and what I was doing

As Netaji was relaxed, I also opened out and spoke for about fifteen minutes He said we should organise a fighting force and also have some diplomatic relations As there was no provisional government of free India, the question about formal diplomatic relations did not arise However, some consultations and some steps in the nature of preliminaries or spadework could be done I was surprised To talk of a force meant people in lakhs, or at least thousands Here in Berlin we were not more than fifteen Indians!

MG What did Netaji do immediately on arrival in Germany?

AH The moment Netaji arrived in Berlin, the Germans were after him Goebbles came into the picture and wanted Netaji to go on the air immediately to counter British propaganda But Netaji did not agree, and said "Wait, wait for some time " Soon enough he got rid of Goebbles and established relations with Von Ribbentrop, the Foreign Minister

MG . Did he broach the subject of setting up a provisional government of free India?

AH Insofar as I remember, Netaji told us that he was against the setting up of a provisional government of free India We had had one such government during World War I, and it was a flop If we set up another one in Europe, this too would be a flop Netaji said we should be able to stand on our own feet We must also have a civilian base some population—to support the provisional government The support we had in Germany was that of three or four thousand prisoners-of-war only It would be a foolish idea to set up a provisional government on their strength

MG Count Ciano, I understand, proposed to Von Ribbentrop that a provisional government of free India be set up, isn't it so?

AH The German or Italian Government might have on its own, thought of a provisional government of free India but certainly not Netaji And you know that as soon as Netaji set up a Provisional Government of Free India in Singapore, Germany was the first to recognise it

MG Did the Germans try to win him over to their ideology?

AH Insofar as ideology is concerned, to be fair to the Germans they never interfered (with the working of Free India Centre) The ideological training of the Indian Legion was one hundred per cent in our hands We had nothing to do with the Nazi party, or the National Socialist movement Our relations were either with the German Foreign Office or the German Army Even the German Army had nothing to do with the Nazi party And we had nothing to do with Goebbles, Rosenberg or the whole lot of them

MG There must have been some conditions laid down in return for German help

AH There was complete understanding that the money given by the German Government to the Free India Centre was in the nature of loan, to be paid back to Germany when India became free It was a national debt And regular accounts were kept of the money taken Had we succeeded every single penny would have been paid back There was also complete understanding about the Indian Legion's relationship with Germany We were to fight against the Anglo-Americans and against none else We were not concerned with the German advance into East European countries And when Germany declared war on Russia, we made it clear that we won't fight Russia When the German Army was marching through the Caucasus and was approaching the borders of Persia—not actually on the border—we made it clear that we would rather go through Austria, etc, and that, if at all we had to pass through a part of Russia, it would only be in transiting On this point, there was complete understanding between the Germans and Netaji Netaji thought of entering India from the north-west or Persia If the Indian Legion could have liberated even a small portion of western India and some population of India we would have set up the provisional government of free India there

At the time of the Allied landing in France, regiments of the Indian Legion were in France for the purpose of training in actual wartime operations, they were to fight not the French guerillas, but only the Anglo-American forces

MG Did not the Indian Legionnaires take oath by Hitler?

AH I do not remember the exact wording of the oath taken by members of the Indian Legion I can tell you there was a lot of discussion on this subject and Netaji consulted all of us there—he was kind and used to seek advice from us about what to do—and there were protracted discussions The oath did mention Adolf Hitler But it mentioned Netaji's name also Of course, there was a reference to loyalty in general terms, too We had taken arms from Germany and also uniforms We agreed to take the oath because we wished to get the protection afforded by the Geneva Convention to prisoners-of-war and also to get arms from Germany In the absence of an oath, if we had fallen into the hands of the enemy we would have been shot as guerillas The Geneva Convention gave protection only to organised forces We were part of the infantry The Germans were generous with rations and arms After prolonged discussions with the German Foreign Office—Netaji could always succeed in persuading Ribbentrop to his own viewpoint—Netaji insisted that all points agreed upon be cleared with Hitler also

MG German discipline?

AH German thoroughness and discipline played havoc with our work There were about two to four thousand Indian prisoners-of-war in Germany The Germans gave us a free hand We went and talked to them But initially there was some resistance to our propaganda And this resistence persisted even when we mentioned the presence of Netaji there We consulted amongst us whether Netaji should go and talk to them But we did not want him to be insulted by the prisoners-of-war When we reported to Netaji, he said it was his job and that he would go and talk to them A meeting was arranged It was in a big hall While Netaji was addressing them a group at one end was seen coughing loudly There was another group at the other end also coughing loudly It was a motley crowd with people from all over India Louder the noise, the louder was Netaji in his address He told them he would go to the front also Then we asked the Germans to separate the two groups, that is, those who were with us and those who were not prepared to join us Disciplined as the Germans are, they said that all the prisoners-of-war were in one camp and could not be taken out, also that they could not be divided When we persisted they said they would take two or three days to sort the matter out During these days, the reactionaries amongst them tried to brainwash the prisoners-of-war and drove fear in their hearts that, if they became disloyal (to the Crown), their children and elders back home would be put to death by the British Against all this what was it that Netaji had offered them? He also had called upon them to shed blood He did not promise them even bouquets of flowers (if at all, this was to be placed on their graves or *samadhis*) But the prisoners-of-war thought about it all and later, when Netaji visited them in their camp, there were cries of "Netaji Zindabad", "Netaji Zindabad" More than half of them were ready to join him

From now on the Indian Legion grew rapidly From the original fifteen, it went up to thirty, and then one hundred Then it grew by tens and later by hundreds

MG Was Netaji critical of the moves by Indian leaders?

AH Netaji did not talk to us about Indian politics or Indian leaders He did not criticise any national leader For Gandhiji, he had the highest regard

MG I think, it was Netaji who first called him the 'Father of the Nation' Netaji had also given us the national anthem, the national greeting and also the word Netaji How were these coined by him?

AH On the national anthem there were prolonged consultations We all discussed the subject at some length I also had a hand in it I opposed *Bande Mataram*, and said that as it was in Sanskrit, it could not become the national anthem How many ordinary people can understand it? The national anthem-to-be must be such that it can be sung A man like myself, with no familiarity with music and with a husky voice, should also be able to sing it I have heard it a thousand times, and have tried to sing it, but could not recite it In (Gandhiji's) ashram, I saw that we would catch hold of some women or even a child and make them sing it I asked Netaji to sing it He said "Don't be frivolous!"

Netaji himself did not suggest *Jana Gana Mana* as the anthem He used to throw ideas around and provoked thinking and discussion The national anthem must be secular I bitterly opposed *Sare Jahan se Accha*, because, I said, it was a communal song You remember the verse *"ai aab rode ganga, voh din hai yaad tujh ko, utra tere kinare jab karvan hamara "* Whose caravan? Of course, of Muslims If you say the Aryans, then there were the Dravidians to object

About the greeting *Jai Hind* also, I had a contribution to make The room of the Indian Legion, where I stayed, was a dormitory where eight of us stayed There was another Muslim, Abdul, five Sikhs, and one of another community I started greeting the Sikhs with a *sat sri akaal* Some replied, other's didn't Within a few days, when we had become friends they asked me one day with folded hands not to greet them with *sat sri akaal* one so greets the other in the Gurdwara, I said, then why do you object? They said this called for their reciprocating it with *assalam alaikum* and they found it difficult to greet that way "It does not come out of our throats We have tried our best and we can not say it Therefore, please don't greet us that way" So we started to greet each other with a "hello" I mentioned to Netaji that we had started greeting each other with a "hello" He said I talked nonsense He encouraged ideas and wanted that we should think of a national greeting We were about twenty of us We got thinking I had heard some Jat soldiers wishing each other *Jai Ramjiki* I liked the sound, and said to myself why not greet each other with *Jai Hindustanki* I repeated it to myself and then tried it on colleagues *Jai Hindustanki, Jai Hind, Jai Hind* It was short It caught fire

I wished to see Netaji He said you waste my time, and have become spoilt in Berlin I told him that we had thought of greeting and most of us had liked it It was *Jai Hind* My apprehension that Netaji might turn it down was baseless It's wonderful, he said And that's how, the national greeting became popular

MG How about the title 'Netaji'? Was it a translation of the German word 'Fuhrer'?

AH No It had nothing to do with Hitler's leadership It was started by Vyas, myself and a few others Someone amongst us—I won't name people—addressed Netaji as Subhas Babu We did not like it For, too much of familiarity with the leader is not good for his image as a leader The question was how to address him To address him as 'Sir' did not give us happiness And he did not like "sirring" There has to be some distance between the followers and the leader So we—that is, Vyas, myself and others—discussed amongst ourselves, and we decided to call him 'Netaji' We also decided not to ask him about it We just started calling him 'Netaji' It came to be accepted by all

MG What, in your opinion, is the most important aspect of the Indian Legion?

AH Complete integration When we started the

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Indian Legion, we did away with caste and creed There were two groups amongst the members of the Legion Some wanted *jhatka* meat, others were for *non-jhatka* There was a prolonged debate over how to get rid of this Muslims said they would not eat *jhatka* meat In the beginning we decided to give in, but we also decided that we must get over this in this foreign land Food was doled out to the two groups from a single window There were thus two queues Those in one line who came first got bigger joints Others following them got smaller pieces After half the line was finished, the one group saw that the other was getting bigger joints They eyed each other with envy. There was a scramble Sturdy Sardarjis donning turbans and with beards tied properly came forward and opted for *non-jhatka* Within weeks, we got over the business of *jhatka* and *non-jhatka* Another aspect of integration was sharing the work There were the so-called martial races Its members said they would not do scavenging, or cleaning the latrines The question boiled down to this shall we call Germans to do this work?, or create a special class for this work?

MG So what did you do?

AH The two things that have influenced me most, or made me a man was the experience in Gandhiji's ashram (where every new entrant had to clean latrines for a month) and the discipline in the Indian Legion, or the Indian National Army We started doing the scavenging work for those not wanting to do it After a few days they all felt ashamed of themselves and started doing it

MG Was there any contact between the Indian Legion and the Indian National Army when you were in South-East Asia?

AH Yes, Netaji was in constant touch with Nambiar of the Indian Legion, in whom he had full confidence

MG It is said that among the best speeches delivered by Netaji in Germany were the ones on January 26, and at Koeningsberg, his last speech to the Legion before he embarked on his journey in the U-boat to Japan Did he hint that he would be going to East Asia?

AH No This speech was not all that stirring It was a good speech He was preparing the people to be on their own There may be times when Subhas Bose may go to the front and may not be with them all the time They should be prepared to do without him He did not mention that he would be going to South-East Asia This would have been dangerous At that time there had been trial flights from Germany to Japan Netaji asked that he be enabled to go on one of these flights After Germany attacked Russia, the idea of a German defeat did not cross our minds However, we did feel that the war would be a long and protracted one When Mohan Singh's army in South-East Asia got disorganised, the Japanese thought Subhas Chandra Bose's presence in that theatre could change the shape of things

MG Did he, when in India, think that if the war spread to the East, the East may hold better prospects for India's liberation battle?

AH He might indeed have He always thought of all the possibilities and all the alternatives, thousands of possibilities I think he thought about all these things even while in jail and possibly discussed it with others there in jail He did not mention to anyone not concerned that he may go to the East He told the Germans that he was keen to go, and he was prepared for the worst But Hitler said "Nothing doing Excuse me I have many enemies If there were a mishap, they would say that I had killed you "

MG You mean this was discussed between Netaji and Hitler personally?

AH Yes Netaji had influence over Ribbentrop, and could bring him round to his own viewpoint Ribbentrip and others told Hitler that they had tried to persuade Netaji not to go, but now you advise him. And it was Hitler who told Netaji that he would not allow him to travel to Japan in a plane

MG And then you went to South-East Asia in the U-boat? Please tell me more about it

AH We had romantic notions about the journey in a submarine When we boarded it we found that the U-boat had space enough for only a bed It was a small room where the entire crew, the doctors and us all sat together We sat up all the 24 hours And we sat there motionless There was no elbow room at all We felt cramped The moment we got up, we found ourselves in the way of somebody or the other It was like solitary confinement Even in jail the living conditions would be better Such then was our life, and I felt concerned about Netaji's health He had been losing weight I asked the doctor, and we made Netaji take some exercise

As soon as we entered the submarine, we smelt diesel all over It looked as if the blankets supplied to us had been soaked in diesel and wrung Our food also smelt of diesel And when we sat down to eat, we felt there was diesel in our food also In fact, we were so impregnated with the smell of diesel, that we would like not to eat Even Netaji

One day Netaji asked what was there to eat It could either be beef or ham We had to eat whatever was there I told him the question of what it was did not arise Then I met the cook and looked into the pantry As chance would have it, there was a bag of rice And there was a small supply of lentils also I made *khichree* for Netaji He was happy and started offering it to the officers of the U-boat Although in the beginning they did not relish it, later they also liked it I was apprehensive lest the quantity of rice should get consumed fast Thank God, it continued till the end of the journey by the German submarine It took us two months to travel from Germany to a point off the coast of Madagascar This was the longer lap of our journey

MG Was the journey eventful?

AH We had to cross the North Sea This was the only way to get to the Atlantic Ocean British submarines were systematically firing depth charges, and north of Scotland we had an encounter, but we scraped through Then, near the coast of South Africa also, we encountered a tanker and our submarine torpedoed it

MG Was it the S S Hermis?

AH I don't remember the name However, the tanker sank There was an encounter with yet another tanker This experience was very frightening You know about the hierarchy of a submarine In the army you give awards for bravery to individuals In the case of a submarine, the award is given to the boat It is a collective effort So, if five crosses are given, the captain of the boat takes one, the torpedo master takes another, the diesel master takes the third and the person at the wheel takes the fourth The fifth is at the discretion of the captain Each one is a specialist in the work Incidentally, it was not necessary for Henry Ford to have been a good driver One may or may not be educated, but each one specialises in one branch

Now the engineer of our submarine had not handled the steering wheel Once he came and mishandled it The boat surfaced before it could fire the depth charge The tanker fellows spotted it and turned round on the submarine The captain of our boat was shouting at the top of his voice "Dive, Dive" And he was rebuking the people for mishandling it We all heard it The railing of our boat touched its bottom Netaji, who was giving me dictation, continued with his dictation While the faces of all members of the crew were tense and panicky, here was Netaji continuing to give me dictation. At one point he said "Hasan, I am repeating it for the third time, and you are not taking it down You are not attentive" I was certainly nervous Our boat hit the railing before it dived

It was miraculous escape for us When the event was over, we heard over the loudspeaker, the captain of the ship telling the crew that they were all Germans and proud of the fact However, they must learn a lesson from the Indian leader and his secretary who were cool and composed This mishap took place four or five days before we got to the predetermined point off the coast of Madagascar

During the three months that we were in the submarine, Netaji was revising his *Indian Struggle* He was also drafting memoranda on various subjects I had to type three or four hours a day There was terrific pressure on me The most important work was the preparation for a meeting with Tojo What would we talk to him, and how What were the problems to be discussed with him Netaji would think aloud He asked me to imagine I were Tojo, and then put questions to him or he would take on the role of Tojo and asked me to reply as Subhas Chandra Bose He used to go into great details and examined all possible points that might arise He had gone through all the possible questions one could think of, including, for instance, the future of Indians in South Africa The future of the Andamans was also discussed We must take them All these issues were thought of and discussed thoroughly not only in the submarine but possibly earlier also, even in Germany If a particular question is raised, what should be the correct reply

Netaji used to dictate, and I used to type it out He was meticulous and pointed out mistakes, or even of punctuation I had to type them again, and then again And finally after all this had been gone through, he would tear off all the sheets He had in the process stored all the information in his mind. The rehearsals were so thorough that I could have answered all the questions When we reached Japan except the revised manuscript of the *Indian Struggle* I don't think we had much readymade material We were not clear in our own mind how things would shape themselves We were not clear how the Indians in Malaya would treat us, whether they would be friendly or become hostile We did not have a clear picture of the conditions of Indians in Malaya

What was most remarkable about our U-boat journey was the meeting of the German and Japanese submarines off the coast of Madagascar at the date and time exact to a minute Our periscope was sighted by the Japanese and ours sighted theirs

Sometimes they came up and then our boat came up

After we entered the Japanese submarine, there was no problem of food The Japanese had decided to treat Netaji with great honour When on our way to Tokyo for the first time we reached Formosa, the Japanese military unrolled the red carpet, obviously because Tojo had sent instructions that Netaji be received with great honour so as to put him in a good mood The top military brass came to honour him, and they did this in the Japanese way Netaji was informed that the Japanese would receive him with the Japanese protocol and not the international protocol, and that this was a special honour reserved for him We had known Yamomoto and the military attaché and did not know how the civilians and military persons would deal with us

Netaji was invited to a banquet I was sitting close to him Came very senior military officers They came with the sword hanging and they bowed as we do in sijda Netaji was about to do the same, when the Japanese captain seated behind him indicated to him that he would bend only half an inch or so, just to indicate that he was about to, but not bow down This, we were told, was a unique honour to him

The reception given to Netaji at Tokyo was overwhelming The honour given to him had never been extended to any foreigner It was truly staggering If you tell any scholar of Japan and of its way of life that according to Abid Hasan this is how the Japanese had honoured Netaji, he would not believe you The Japanese never go to this extent

Netaji was a terrific person to work for, disciplined and impatient Fifteen minutes before we left Tokyo for Singapore, he came into my room where the papers were lying scattered He ticked me off and said that I would never be efficient, I will never be disciplined or orderly, and that's why he had had to pick up the papers from the floor I was not a professional typist Nevertheless, he fired me whenever he found a mistake It was terrible working for him Once he did not sleep for two days and nights and did not allow me to sleep either, he kept busy all the time When he fired me, I decided to ignore what he said Actually once in Singapore I was so upset that I told him point-blank that I would not work for him and also that, if I did, I would sleep when he went off to sleep, and get up only when he got up

We could not have imagined the response that Netaji got in Singapore and Malaya His speech at Singapore was a memorable one Netaji's speeches had been rehearsed earlier in the U-boat He used to write the Hindustani speeches in the Bengali script Netaji's speeches from Germany had been translated by Habib-ur-Rehman, a Delhi-ite Now that he had to address the Indian community in Malaya, he wished to use more of Urdu words and somewhat Persianised vocabulary He told me that once, while attending a Congress Committee meeting, he had heard Jawaharlal Nehru using the word *chunanche* again and again He didn't understand what this word *chunanche* meant (but it sounded interesting) I told him that the words to be used for the common people had to be simple My language was Hindustani I cut out many difficult words from the speech He did not like it, and ticked me off and said that he would never get anything translated by me Anyway as usual he tore off the sheets When he spoke at Singapore the impact of his speech was tremendous Even the children could follow it

Afterwards he always used simple *Hindustani* in his speeches The enthusiastic response in Singapore was a surprise even to Netaji Also surprising was the response of the Muslim soldiers Agents of the British has spread the word that a Hindu leader had come and they must not listen to him While the Congress leaders were in jail Mohammed Ali Jinnah had a free hand in carrying on his propaganda Even Netaji was apprehensive about the possible response of the Muslim soldiers However, their response was unexpectedly warm Netaji himself was surprised

When he was in Singapore, Netaji felt that apart from laying down lives for the cause, it was also important to have resources Many were prepared to shed blood, but not many to part with their wealth The money that we got in Malaya and Singapore was mostly from the Chettiar community Of them there was a sizeable number in Singapore And they were wealthy I recall that a day before the Dussehra festival, the highest priest of the Chettiars, accompanied by two or three other priests came without prior notice to see Netaji They asked me with folded hands to take them to Netaji I could not argue with these bigwigs and ushered them in They tied their *angavastram* and requested Netaji to come next day to the temple for the pooja Netaji told them "You want me to come to the temple where the Muslims, Parsis and even the other Hindus are not allowed to enter and pray, and agree to the request of those who preach untouchability!"

He did not allow them to speak and asked that they be thrown out We were unhappy, and knew that the Chettiars' funds would dry up But we knew that Netaji would not compromise

The function of Dussehra was at 5 PM the next day. Half-an-hour before the function the priests came again They wished to see Netaji I refused They insisted and prostrated The guards that day were tough Garhwalis I did not wish to let the priests in and I could not get them thrown out After some argument I agreed to allow them in just for two minutes Netaji was angry The priests then asked him that they had arranged a public meeting in the temple premises, and there would be Muslims—they repeated the word Muslims several times—and Christians and others also He should please come and address them As it was a public meeting, Netaji agreed He went there I also accompanied him You cannot imagine what I saw there There were South Indian Muslims with their traditional black cap all over the place even in the holy of holies, the sanctum sanctorum The doors of the temple had been thrown open to all Vast crowds came into the sanctum sanctorum I, a Muslim, was also with him They put the *tilak* on him and on me as well. Then came the speech It was one of the most moving speeches that I have heard Netaji painted a picture of India in the offing, there was nothing that we could not do Who could have ever imagined that the Indian women would take up arms as the Rani of Jhansi had done Women in uniforms! Yes Traditions can be broken! It is for the younger people to do it

I recollect an incident One captain in the Rani Jhansi Regiment, a Malabar girl of 22 years, was in the Rangoon area When we referred to something, she told us that she had never been to India, and had not even seen it This girl had left her parents in Ipo and come all the way to the front of Burma to fight for the liberation of India!

MG Some scholars have said that the Indian Army had to retreat because the Japanese did not give them full support

AH I don't agree At the top level there was the fullest cooperation There were some problems at the field level commands of the army administration Problems arose because the Japanese themselves were short of arms and supplies I remember once the INA had sent one Colonel as an observer to the Japanese units on the Arakan front When he came back to report to Netaji and some of us, he said he was sitting by the side of the Japanese General, when a unit of about 200 passed before him The Colonel noticed that only the third or fourth man had a gun He asked the General what unit this was He said it was the artillery How is it that they don't have the cannons The General said they knew that the enemy at a particular position had cannon The General said that they would attack that position, capture arms and then turn them on the enemy The colonel said the General meant it (And the Japanese are not known for their sense of humour) The organisation of the Japanese Army was such that the field commanders had tremendous powers The help got from the home government was only marginal They had to depend on their own resources And we had to deal with the field commanders who were themselves short of food and arms supplies We also faced similar situations

I was with the Gandhi Regiment, and had some six hundred men under me Once when I asked them to dig trenches, they said "Sir, we don't know which army you had led earlier Don't you see that we are starving If we expend all our energies on digging trenches how much of strength shall we have to fight?" And I remember such a unit at the rear advanced and attacked a British position, and captured it But later, we saw the land of India in front of us, and had to retreat, because we had no ammunition We literally wept We had a few brenguns, not even machine guns

Dying while fighting was one of the ideas before us But Netaji was a rational man He knew he could not take us along Therefore he asked the local commander, General Loganathan, to surrender I and the six hundred men under me decided to follow Netaji to Thailand I told them that Netaji was not the man to surrender, and that he would prefer to die than surrender They all followed me We reached Thailand's border and then got vehicles to reach Bangkok

MG I have read of some desertions from the INA of a Sikh officer and his men.

AH Yes, the second in command of one regiment, Shamsher Singh, deserted Sikhs formed the backbone of the INA and the Sikh soldiers were upset with this desertion Five of them said to me that this Shamsher Singh had brought them shame and that they would cut him to pieces (After we returned to India, I am told, they did trace Shamsher Singh out and cut him to pieces)

While we were in Burma, there was no talk of Netaji going to Russia It was only after the surrender by Japan that this prospect was discussed This talk about going to Russia could have been thought only with the idea of continuing the struggle of India's liberation We knew there were differences between the Allies and the Russians At some stage, these differences could become acute and we may go through Waziristan The Russians also knew that we (INA) had befriended Japan for our own end, the aim of liberating India

The idea of continuing the struggle was certainly there Otherwise, why should have Netaji thought of taking his big staff with him We were about twenty or twentyfive and were to travel in two planes We had reached Saigon From there we were to go onwards to Tokyo That was not our destination At this stage Marshal Terauchi stepped in He said that although Japan had formally surrendered, the Americans were shooting down the Japanese planes "Your two planes could be targeted Should that happen that entire world would blame us for your death No, I will not allow you to travel in your plane You please travel in my plane, which is going to Tokyo with the surrender documents The Americans have been notified and also about the route to be taken, and they will not bomb it" Only one seat was offered At our insistence another seat was made available We were to follow in the other two planes

Tokyo was to be the first stop For, what was there for us to do there? It was meaningless to go there Our destination was beyond

Netaji was taking his entire staff with him openly and not secretly. It was known to all And it was also known that he was taking gold and treasure with him Neither the British nor the Americans have said that Netaji ran away or fled

When Netaji came from Singapore, we arranged for the treasure which was to go with him We separated the jewels from the gold When the plane was about to leave—Netaji had gone in the military police vehicle and I was to follow—I reached there with the two suitcases They were heavy I saw that the plane was waiting for me The suitcases were handed over Then I remembered that the golden cigarette case of Netaji was left behind I shouted to them to hang on, and then rushed to give the cigarette case. His camera, however, was left behind

MG Gold and treasure could there have been some foul play?

AH The Japanese would never have done this I have seen how the Japanese honoured Netaji

MG After the surrender of Japan, even though he knew that it would be destroyed by the British, Netaji asked Stracey to show him some models for the memorial to the INA It is significant that there were some Anglo-Indians too who adored Netaji

AH Stracey is an instance

MG To have organised a force within nine months of his landing in South-East Asia and led them to liberate India from across Burma's border was a remarkable feat by any yardstick What was it in Netaji that people followed him to shed blood at his bidding?

AH Netaji was a totally dedicated person, dedicated to a cause We knew his daily routine He had no private life of his own It was all public life, from morning till evening He was accessible to all, and his doors were always open

He ate the same food as the soldiers of the Indian National Army and his ration was the same as for everybody—the soldiers and the officers ■

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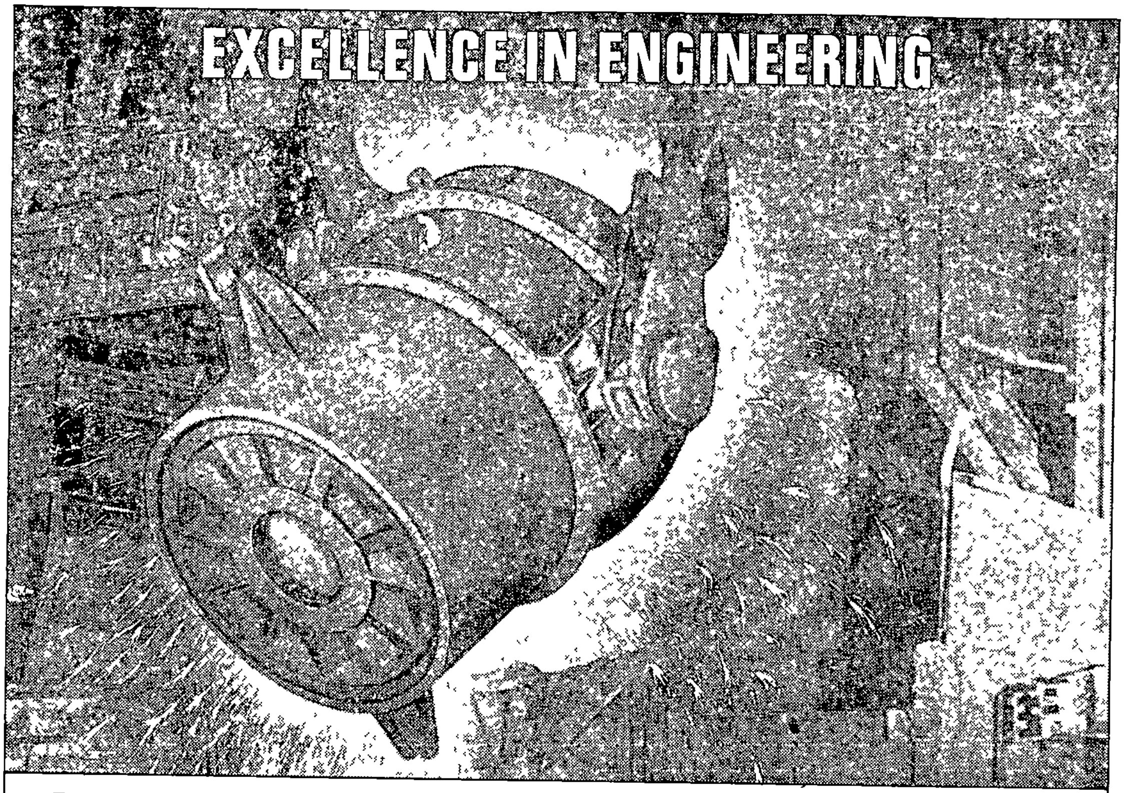

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Sectarian Nationalism in Musicology

KUNAL GHOSH

The famous Pakistani exponent of Sufiana music (music of the Sufis), Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, has been campaignig for allowing musical exchange between Pakistan and India. He recently gave a press conference while participating in a three-day function organised to announce the RPG festival for the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation (January 28-30, 1997, New Delhi). He said.

> Politics has been the barrier so far. We must change the scenario, because music and music alone can bridge the divide between the two countries.

A music scholar asked "Why blame the politicians alone when connoisseurs in Pakistan object to the 'Hindu' names of the *raagas*?" I should point out here that any name of Indian origin is considered Hindu whether it has a religious connection or not. For instance, *raag* "Vasant" is named after a season. Likewise, *raag* Asavari has no religious connotation and yet it is sought to the replaced by similar sounding "Peshavari". *Raag* Durga, with obvious religious link as it is named after a goddess, is sought to be given the choicest replacement—"Murga".

We shall take up the response of Fateh Ali Khan to this question later. What we observe in the phenomenon of above description is the Linguistic Exclusion Principle applied in the sphere of musicology, whereas this principle has been shown to be one of the main features of sectarian nationalism by Ghosh (See Ref. 1 for definition and exposition). By virtue of this principle words and phrases of Indian origin are sought to be excluded from a language, and in this case specifically from the language of music. Through this process the musicians' language would become compatible with Urdu which over the centuries has been developed as the language of the Muslim by replacing Indian words of Sanskritic-Dravidian origin with Persio-Arabic words, to the extent feasible. A Pakistani scholar, Iqbal Khan (see Ref. 2), has traced the root of the two-nation theory to this historical peculiarity in the growth of Urdu. (See Footnote 1)

In addition to the linguistic exclusion principle, the same press conference brings to the fore another important feature of Muslim sectarian nationalism. It tends to impose Urdu, the so-called language of the Muslim, on the peoples of diverse tongues, such as Punjabi, Sindhi, Kashmiri, Pushtu, etc. This imposition is so complete that it tends to suppress the local vernaculars to the point of extinction. Right now in the Pakistani part of Punjab the medium of education, even in the primary stage, is Urdu and not Punjabi. Urdu purists have accused Fateh Ali Khan of "corrupting" the tradition of Qawwali by singing it in his native Punjabi. They hold that Urdu alone is the correct medium of Qawwali. Clearing misconceptions, the singer answered this charge.

Dr Ghosh is a Professor Aerospace Engineering, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kanpur

> Some of the best exponents of Sufiana Qalaam, Bulle Shah and Waris Shah, have sung in Punjabi.

I cannot help pointing out that after a couple of generations when every citizen of Punjab becomes literate, in Urdu of course, none would create poetry in Punjabi and perhaps none would speak in it, and Fateh Ali Khan's defence of Punjabi would become a hypothetical question-mark.

◆

RETURNING to the question of name change for *raagas*, Fateh Ali Khan unequivocally asserted.

> The culture of the two countries was the same, and the culture is still the same. There cannot be any question of renaming the *raagas* because they are sanctified by tradition. Besides there names were not given to please any ruler. They were given to notify the essential character of the melody.

Well said Khan Saheb! Bold and beautiful is the speech of a Sufi. This brings out the third important feature that sectarian nationalism and Sufi-ism are in constant mutual opposition, ever since the times of Aurangzeb and Dara Shikoh. Sufis have always versed and sang in the folk tongue and used the folk culture to bind peoples of different faiths together.

Fateh Ali Khan has loudly wondered if the Pakistani authorities can allow the cricketers of India and Pakistan to play together, then why not the musicians? The answer is simple. Music is not cricket. Cricket reinforces the role of antagonists, albeit in a healthy competitive way. In music there is no antagonism and no antagonist Music reaches the inner recess of the heart Cricket does not Indian music, including Qawwali music, is mainly devotional and spiritual in nature Moreover it does not accept the confines of religious denominations and tends to remove all emotional barriers It brings peoples together in a fashion which cricket does not and which is anathema to the sectarian nationalist ■

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FOOTNOTE

1 This process has been taken to its logical extreme by a dominant section of the Muslims of Mauritius who are demanding that Arabic should be declared as their language instead of Urdu, although they speak a form of corrupted Bhojpuri at home Dr Heera, who is Muslim by faith and is a Professor of Urdu in the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Mauritius, disclosed this with great concern to Dr Giriraj Kishore while the latter was visiting Mauritius in 1995 Dr Kishore is a famous Hindi novelist and heads the Creative Writing Cell of IIT, Kanpur

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SPORTS

Twinkle Twinkle Little Star

DEEPAK PAL

Remember the nursery rhyme? Well, I do Yes, even at this ripe age, I distinctly remember every bit, every word of it Rather, I was reminded of it the other day Though no star-gazer, yet wonder-struck—like billions the world over—I was gazing with a gaping mouth And, there I could unmistakably spot that twinkling "little star"! A new star, and a bright one at that, was born and was twinkling on the tennis horizon—Martina Hingis her name!

She had done it! The confidence exuding in her Her mother, Mealine, was doubly confident that some day she would do it She has not betrayed the confidence that her mother reposed in her It stood her in good stead and enthused the little 16-year-old lass to help don the crown of the youngest-ever champion—man or woman—a milestone, that before Hingis was reached, but by only one That happened in the nineteenth century—to be precise, exactly 110 years ago in 1887—when Britain's own Charlotte Lottie Dodd annexed the Wimbledon title at a tender age of 15 years and 10 months After that the entire tennis world had to wait for yet another century for someone to achieve that feat And, here's she—Martina Hingis her name!

But, alas! Martina could not break Lottie Dodd's record just by a few months This is Hingis's second grand slam title—her first being the 1997 Australian Open, where she got the better of France's Mary Pierce in just 59 minutes—the score reading 6-2, 6-2

There on the podium stood she—Martina Hingis her name!

◆

THAT day in July 1997, the jam-packed lush green Wimbledon centre court clapped and shouted, waved and encouraged the youngest "queen" as she went round doing the victory lap, holding aloft the coveted trophy, smiling and dancing all the while A proud moment not only for Martina but for Melanie Hingis as well, for it was she who was absolutely certain to have spotted the latent talent in her daughter and was sure as death that she would make the most of it It was she, who named her daughter after the legendary Martina Navratilova, Melanie's good old friend Like Navratilova, Martina was also born in Czechoslovakia—while the former opted for America, the Hingis' settled in Switzerland

It was sheer coincidence that Martina, the Jr was born into a tennis family Both her parents used to play tennis And, it was quite natural that she was handed over a racquet at the age of only three Under the watchful eyes of Melanie, Martina flowered into a gifted player and started taking part in competitive tennis at an age of only five The "wonder girl" from Switzerland made history, when she at 12, became the youngest-ever junior champion at the French Open in Roland Garros The next year she became the Wimbledon Junior Champion and the World Junior No 1

To everybody's surprise, including Navratilova's, Martina Hingis turned "pro" only at the age of 14. She was too young to withstand the extra pressure, one thought. But Melanie put everyone's doubt to rest. "It is no extra pressure on her," she said, "she is playing her natural game." Martina, too, toed her mother's viewpoint. "I am not under any kind of pressure. I play the way I please. I remember just one thing—there is the ball racing towards me, what I need to do is to racquet it back to my rival's court. That is exactly what I do. Today I do it. Tomorrow as well, I shall be doing the same thing."

◆

WELL, Martina meant what she said. One who had followed her racquet doing wonders at the Wimbledon, could easily discern that till she reached the final she had not dropped a single set, rather, she looked at home on the faster grass surface. On her path to the final, Hingis accounted for Anne Kremer (Luxembourg) 6-4, 6-4; Olga Barabanshikova (Belarus) 6-2, 6-2, Nicole Arendt (USA) 6-1, 6-3, Sabine Applemans (Belgium) 6-1, 6-3, Denisa Chladkova (Czech Republic) 6-3, 6-2, and Anna Kournikova (Russia) 6-3, 6-2.

So, her reaching the final and eventually becoming the champion is no fluke, by any means. It will not be out of place to mention here that in 1996 she became the youngest-ever Wimbledon Champion, when she won the women's double teaming up with Helena Sukova. She lost only one match this year—to Iva Majoli in the French Open. But then, one should not forget that Martina was still recuperating from a knee injury and was not cent per cent fit to play her natural game. But, at the Wimbledon the Swiss World No.1 was at her best—both physically and mentally, and fought back with tenacity from a flying start by the 28-year-old Czech, Jana Novotna, to wrap up the final with a 2-6 (the only set that Hingis lost), 6-3, 6-3 score.

"I felt like a beginner," Martina said after the match. "I didn't play badly. She was just all over the net." Novotna said: "I came into the match with a pulled abdominal muscle. Unfortunately I had a lot of pain in the second set and it got worse and worse throughout the match." But both have a contrasting style of play. Martina prefers to stay at the baseline, relying on her consistent forehand and backhand, while Novotna mixes aggression with power and prefers to rush to the net. "Two different players came together in this game," Martina observed. "She's aggresive, I'm defensive. I did it this time," the smiling teenager added. "She could win next time. She deserves to win this title."

◆

MARTINA and her mother Melanie Hingis lead a simple life in a small village in Switzerland abounded by the Alps mountain. This jolly and gay little "butterfly" is a different sort of person. She likes to read a lot, and spends her leisure, more often than not, reading story books. What is more—she knows four different languages. She can speak, read and write French, German, Czech and English. Not very many players are endowed with such a gift. Martina's personality may not be irrelevant to her tennis. Her outside interests also include horse-riding and roller-blading, and her friendly nature suggests a well-balanced upbringing that will help her cope with success. Commenting about her Jana Novotna said: "She's a very nice person who enjoys her success. Even at her young age she is very respectful of the other players, and that's very good to see." The veteran Mary Joe Fernandez said: "The new generation has more power from both sides and just 'whack'. Martina is different. She's No 1, and that's a good case for saying you don't have to be a big hitter to do well. She's very smart and moves well and uses other people's pace."

The players she beat find her difficult to dislike. Martina played women's doubles and mixed doubles as well as singles in the Wimbledon. And after an easy fourth-round victory over Sabine Applemans, she met the Belgian at the net and said: "I'm happy it was a quick match, because I have to play two more matches today." Sabine remarked about Martina: "She talks to everybody. She's nice to everybody. Of course, she has a lot of confidence. She's the No 1 player in the world. Without that attitude, maybe she wouldn't get so far."

That's it! That's much more than one expects of one's rivals. That sounds a warning to Steffi Graf—the unquestioned "queen" of the game. The women's singles in all the grand slams had started losing the glamour and interest and were becoming a one-sided affair with foregone conclusions till the emergence of this "Halley's Comet"-like force to reckon with. A rare phenomenon, indeed!

Who but Steffi Graf is afraid of Martina Hingis? The throne she won de-throning Martina Navratilova is at stake! There lurks yet another Martina—there is she! Protect the throne, Steffi! Watch out your steps! There in the horizon can you see, as we do, the "twinkle twinkle little star"?—Martina Hingis her name! ■

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Art of Publishing Letters to the Editor

G.S. BHARGAVA

I had an interesting interaction the other day with one of the professional writers of letters to the editor, as they are called somewhat patronisingly. He says he has been included in a book of records, not Guinnes, though, for having written the largest number of letters to newspapers in a year. Apart from wielding a facile pen—he corrected me saying that he worked on a word processor—and untiring perseverance, he has also mastered the art of getting his letters published. The acceptance rate is 90 per cent, according to him.

How does he manage it? What is the secret, I wanted to know. Needlessly lowering his voice to a whisper—even if one shouted from the housetops, he or she would not have been heard in the din at the party—he took me into confidence. For newspapers whose editors write weekly columns, the surest passport to publication of your letter is to write about the column, preferably praising the wit and wisdom of the writer!

The second principle is to join issue with a letter already published in the newspaper. Fomenting controversy, even a phoney one, is another way of getting your letters published. Then, there are newspapers and newspapers, some are so hard-pressed for letters that they will publish anything. Even newspapers like *The Times of India* with very limited space for the correspondence column will publish letters demanding the resignation of Laloo Prasad Yadav or a nuclear test by India. Does he read all the newspapers to which he writes letters? No. He is selective both about the newspapers he flips through and the topics he focuses on. Which is the newspaper which, according to him, has the most readable correspondence column? The Calcutta edition of *The Statesman*.

If the experience of my interlocutor is an index, most newspapers are haphazard in their attitude to the letters column, which is said to represent the voice of the people and is a source of useful feedback for policy-makers. It does not suggest a professional approach. I also understand that if you write to newspapers which insist on publishing the full address of the writer, you are inundated with junk mail from all sorts of persons, particularly property dealers, builders, apart from persons plying 'delicate' trades like what is called *pairavi* in Hyderabad or broking and its cruder, even if more lucrative, versions.

Which reminds me of an incident which triggered *The Hindustan Times* policy of publishing the full address of the letter writer during B.G. Verghese's editorship in the 1970s. (It has now been wisely changed.) There was a letter highly critical of Madhu Limaye, who was a Member of the Lok Sabha. Limaye, notorious for his thin skin, threatened to sue the letter writer and also drag the newspaper to the court. Efforts to contact the letter writer at the (unpublished) address given by him were of no avail because it was fake. So the newspaper had to apologise to Limaye not for the contents of the allegedly offensive letter but for the phantom writer. As a prophylactic against such practical jokes of a low order, it was decided to insist on and publish the full address of the writer, which was like drafting virgins as sex workers to prevent diseases like AIDS. *The New York Times* and *The Times*, London, also insist on the full address and telephone number of the writers of letters to cross-check with them and inform them of any changes being made in the letters.

◆

TALKING of AIDS, *The Statesman* carried an interesting report about protest by truck drivers against a 'foreign donor-driven AIDS programme (meaning anti-AIDS programme)' which, they say, unfairly dubs them as a 'high-risk group'. It was based on a press conference held some days earlier by Purushottaman Mulloi of Joint Action Council, Kannur (JACK), and N.D. Pancholi of the Citizens for Democracy. Purshottaman and his organisation have been championing the human rights of persons victimised in the name of fighting the HIV epidemic in Kannur district in Kerala.

They point out that because of the cussedness of a foreign donor, the National AIDS Control Organisation follows the 'targeted risk group' approach. As a result, an entire village—Chochi in Haryana—has been declared AIDS prone and subjected to social ostracism. Girls from the village cannot get married even when they are disease free. Similarly, all truck drivers have been branded AIDS prone. Now the tribals all over the country are being put in the category, just as Africans were earlier. It is a hangover from the American White male approach to other communities, a kind of neo-Brahminism.

The press conference, unfortunately, did not get the play it deserved even if the subject has been covered by other newspapers earlier. It is a topic which needs to be highlighted in all its dimensions.

Meanwhile, according to the *Andhra Pradesh Times*, the restructuring of the Andhra Pradesh State Electricity Board, perennially in the red, seems to be on the cards now. It has been hanging fire for over a year while Haryana and Karnataka have done it, Orissa has been in the forefront of overhauling sick Electricity Boards by parcelling out its functions and privatising distribution. In Rajasthan too the reform is underway. In Andhra Pradesh, on the other hand, when the government published the draft policy for public discussion, the Joint Council of Action (JCA) of the employees threatened to go on Statewide strike for two days in succession. The strike move has since been dropped following discussions between the government and the employees' representatives. As a news analysis piece in the newspaper brought out, the government emerged winner in the 'marathon talks' because the JCA had 'boxed itself into a corner with its total strike call.'

If the government remains the winner and the reform is through the State which was once surplus in power may have seen the last of its dark days. How the public has been suffering on account of long hours of power shedding in all seasons while vested interests, among bureaucrats and trade union leaders, have been enriching themselves has to be seen to be believed. But very few newspaper editorials reflect the true picture.

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◆

THE Sunday Spice column in *The Deccan Chronicle* while has survived last year's change of guard at the top has been lately reading like an essay in circumlocution. For instance, it revealed the other day that "a few hand-picked journalists from different districts of the State, believed to have access to extremists (Naxalites) and privy to their acts, were accosted to a rendezvous somewhere in a dense jungle of an extremist infested area" to be used as the medium for publicising the Naxalities' support for the new movement for separation of Telengana from the State. It adds:

> Such tendencies among media persons herald the onset of a new class of journalism that has been making its presence felt from the first half of the decade. Its practitioners were found prevaricating from their assigned and legitimate role to inform because they have been vacillating between informing and indoctrinating.

One wonders if even Samuel Johnson could have deciphered turns of phrase like "accosted to a rendezvous" and "prevaricating from assigned role". That apart, the thrust of the piece is whether journalists could be promoters of Naxalite ideas and plans; and the answer is obvious. It is one thing to have access to them and keep their whereabouts secret so as not to become informers, but another to plug their line.

Finally, 'Masterji' (C.P. Seshadri) who passed away recently was an institution. I did not have the good luck to work under him but during my stint with the *Indian Express* as a Resident Editor I had met him and was fascinated by his mastery of copy editing. He stuck to the *Indian Express* even after the death of Ramnath Goenka, who had drawn him to the paper. He worked for it for sixty years without practically a holiday. Last year when I was in Chennai I went to call on him but was told he was ill and did not go to the office, which was unlike Masterji. ■

Fallout of Unaccountability

GAUTAM NAVLAKHA

Now that India is being accused of deploying Prithvi missiles close to its borders with Pakistan this is a good time for the Government of India to explain elaborately its geo-strategic thinking

The GOI contended before the Standing Committee on Defence (1996-97) that Agni was a re-entry technology demonstration project and that it "did not envisage development of a missile system" In other words, our government responded to US arms-twisting by freezing "flight trial programme" so the question of developing medium-range missiles, including the intermediate-range Agni, did not arise However, the same GOI was anxious to show its resolve of standing up to the US (and imperilling the security of its neighbour) by depolying short-range missiles and thus bringing the entire Pakistan under its range It should be remembered that the US is less bothered by short-range missiles and more concerned about IRBMs which have very significant civilian spinoffs

Monopoly over technology is intrinsic to global capitalism Therefore, any elbow room that we can muster vis-a-vis big powers should be the preferred course To do the opposite is to ignore the real sources of threat Indeed by deploying Prithvi missiles against Pakistan regional tensions were fuelled, and by adopting an aggressive posture vis-a-vis Pakistan concessions made to global capital were covered up This helps Right-wing parties at home who take pride in whipping up anti-Pakistan hysteria to help divide the people In other words, it is a basic fallacy to persist with short-range Prithivi missiles which can only be targetted against our neighbours and therefore arouse tensions, while freezing development of long-range Agni missiles essential for acquiring space technology as well as decisive in challenging global monopoly in this field which the US desires Besides any encouragement to an arms race in the region would make nonsense of the Gujral doctrine However, the fact that such a policy has been followed is a direct result of hiding for nearly five decades from Parliament and the public the country's security perspective How dangerous this is for our democratic republic is apparent from a perusal of our Defence Budget

The Budget for 1997-98 proposes to allocate over Rs 45,000 crores for the upkeep and upgradation of the "Armed Forces of the Union" (See Table for explanation) It was claimed that only Rs 39,625 crores, or 17 per cent of the total expenditure of the Government of India, had been allocated The Defence Budget was reported to have increased by a mere Rs 6200 crores and this was found to be inadequate to meet our security requirements In a like-to-like comparison between the BE for 1996-97 and BE for 1997-98, the increase was nearly Rs 9000 crores or by nearly 28 per cent[1] There is also, during the course of the year, the routine hike between the BE and RE Indeed the Fifth Report of the Standing Committee on Defence has recommended "enhancement of funds by Rs 4901 crores over the BE during 1997-98" Significantly, the Public Accounts Committee (1996-97) in its Thirteenth Report pointed to

> the inadequacies in the financial management systems had resulted in cases of excesses, large-scale savings obtaining unnecessary supplementary grants, non-surrender or partial surrender of available savings, injudicious re-approporiations and other financial improprieties like incurrence of unauthorised expenditure, etc

And asked the MOD

> to review the efficacy of Inter-Departmental Monitoring group with a view to making their budgetary processes more realistic as well as effecting strict exchequer control

The report also drew attention to the instructions issued by the Ministry of Finance on March 27, 1986 that

> supplementary demands are required to be severely restricted to genuine unforseen expenditure

The PAC referred to this because it found that

> the MOD have been resorting to obtaining additional allocations without ensuring best and efficient utilisation of funds already sanctioned to them for specific services

Notwithstanding this the defence expenditure will continue to rise It was Rs 3571 crores in 1980-81, crossed Rs 10,439 crores by 1986-87, climbed to Rs 15,426 crores in 1990-91 and reached Rs 29,498 crores by 1996-97[1] The total expenditure of the government during the above-mentioned years was Rs 22,495 crores, Rs 64,023 crores, Rs 105,298 crores and Rs 202,298 crores This makes the share of what is called 'defence' in total expenditure 15 9 per cent, 16 3 per cent, 14 6 per cent and 14 6 per cent respectively The 1997-98 BE raises to 17 per cent what is listed under 'defence' and close to 20 per cent if total military expenses are counted

TABLE

	BE	*RE*	*BE*
Item Head	*1996-97*	*1996-97* *(in crore rupees)*	*1997-98*
Ministry of Defence	241	221	290
Defence Pension	3300	3683	3715
Army	12,952	14,167	19,205
Navy	1834	2055	2259
Air Force	3912	4376	4814
Ordinance	157	396	435
Capital Outlay	8944	8505	8907
Total	31,337	33,403	39,625

If we add to this items tucked away under Finance, Home, Transport, Departments of Atomic Energy and Space, and the Cabinet Secretariat, the following figures emerge

	BE	*RE*	*BE*
Item Head	*1996-97*	*1996-97* *(in crore rupees)*	*1997-98*
Coast Guard	287	254	309
Police	4294	4511	4486
Strategic Roads	281	286	312
Atomic Energy*	240	260	290
Space**	609	694	753
Special Protection Group	46	54	75
Grand Total	37,094	39,208	45,850

* Only 25 per cent of the allocation under DAE is taken

** Only 50 per cent of the allocation made under the head of Rocket Development as well as Space Research considered (See Expenditure Budget 1997-98, Volume 2)

In terms of the total expenditure of the Government of India this represents

	BE	*RE*	*BE*
Item Head	*1996-97*	*1996-97* *(in crore rupees)*	*1997-98*
Total Expenditure	204,600	202,298	232,481
Total Security	37,094	39,208	45,850
Percentage of Total	18 1	19 4	19 7

Fiction of Security

THE Standing Committee on Defence (1996-97, First Report) was informed by the Ministry of Defence that they needed enhancement of funds by Rs 4106 61 crores over the BE for 1996-97 to meet "various revenue and modernisation requirements" It recommended that in view of

> the emerging security scenario the Committee desire that the entire amount projected by the Ministry of Defence may be allocated in the Defence Budget, 1996-97

This advice was readily accepted The reference, however, to the "entire security scenario" is a fiction because this very Committee in its Second Report to the Lok Sabha says that

> the Committee are informed that there is no formal written document called India's National Defence Policy

The Committee remarked that in

> the absence of any document it is not possible for the policy to be analysed and modified

And requested the government

> to examine the feasibility of preparing a formal National Defence Policy document for being placed before the Parliament

The response of the GOI speaks for itself

> Government wish to submit that absence of such a written document should not be construed to imply the non-existence of the policy It is a result of a conscious decision that such a document has not been published

This bureaucratic mumbo-jumbo is not new and honours the philosophy that the less the public knows the better Therefore, denying access to Parliament, press and the public translates into the Officials Secrets Act Anything that is so secret that it can neither be written nor shared with Parliament is undemocratic if not unconstitutional So how can national security be promoted by defying the will of the people reflected in our Parliament? Nor can there be such a thing as "well-defined guidelines and objectives" when we don't even know what these are In other words, such a policy rests on the whims and fancies of a coterie whose own subjective assessments are presented as the "National Security Perspective" which we are supposed to unquestioningly accept Based on this 'policy' allocations are made year after year

Enemy Within

WHILE there is no security policy, there are references strewn here and there that provide some idea of our security concerns A sizeable part of our forces are deployed to fight, and therefore much of our military expenditure is geared for use in "internal wars" In a departure from convention the Annual Report of the MOD (1996-97) accords internal security operations and the "enemy within" high priority This has political and budgetary implications

In the first place, the Indian Army is raised and organised along religious and caste lines To deploy such troops in a multi-lingual and multi-religious country is fraught with danger and totally at variance with our democratic republic

Secondly, by making the search for democratic solutions contingent upon military suppression; social inequalities and regional disparities that lie behind much of domestic strife are pushed into the background

Thirdly, the cost of fighting insurgencies are proving to be a drain on our resources The Punjab Government wants the Central Government to waive the Rs 8000-crore loan it took over the past decade and a half for fighting insurgency This amount is over and above what the State provided from its own resources for fighting insurgents This huge expenditure, the killing of between 20-40,000 persons, etc , originated in the Congress-Akali Dal contention which acquired a sinister twist with the Central Government's patronage of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale

Fourthly, as the use of "Armed Forces of the Union" increases, the demand for raising more troops grows The Army as part of its ten-year plan has proposed a separate 60,000-strong Counter-Insurgency Force and wants the Finance Ministry to make a separate allocation for this The Standing Committee on Home Affairs in its Thirtysecond Report (1996-97) also records that

> the Secretary of the Ministry stated that there has been a pressing need for raising more Battalions of the CPMFs (Central Para-Military Forces) due to increasing demands from State Governments particularly from the North-East and Jammu and Kashmir for internal security duty

Allocations for the Central Police have increased 1500 times between 1950-51 and 1997-98—from Rs 3 crores to Rs 4500 crores. In 1973-74 the Public Accounts Committee in its 131st Report had expressed concern at the

> large-scale and continuous increase in unproductive expenditure of these agencies (CPMF's)

and called for

> an immediate review by an independent high-powered commission

Several States and political parties in their submissions before the Sakaria Commisson had also pointed out that their reliance on "Armed Forces of the Union" is a consequence of the reluctance of the Central Government to provide funds for modernisation of the State Police Force Going by the lawlessness exhibited by the Delhi Police it is evident that a Centrally run-police is likely to be worse than a State police What also merits attention is that at a time when devolution of powers to the States is being demanded, "internal security" is becoming the major concern of the Central Government Apparently, the Centre is laying the ground for poaching on the State's law and order domain It is, threfore, imperative to involve State Governments and Legislatures in any deliberation of the security doctrine and some of them may be able to provide a nuanced picture and highlight issues considered less important by the North Block What lends credibility to this is provided in the Thirtysixth Report of the Committee on Home Affairs which provides statements and responses of a cross-section of the people of the North-East at sharp variance with official wisdom

It is obvious to discerning observers that such strategies in the name of fighting internal insurgency aggravate the people's sense of alienation So a policy that is fuelling discontent is inappropriate for the country's security In its Thirtysixth Report the Parliamentary Committee on Home Affairs affirmed that "problem of insurgency cannot be solved by force alone" And called for a "dialogue and negotiation with various insurgent groups in an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding" and "without any pre-condition" The report reiterates that

> a permanent solution to the insurgency problem in the region can be found only through political negotiations

And goes on to say that

> various accords signed by the Central Government with various insurgent groups must be implemented in true spirit

This again underlines the need for parliamentary control over the formulation of a security policy

Absence of Accountability

ABSENCE of a security doctrine and therefore accountability means that the public is unaware of the premises and reasoning behind decisions As a result adhocism and subjective assessment rule the roost with disastrous consequences To reverse a decision once taken becomes an arduous and costly task For instance, we have been spending Rs 6 crores per day on Siachen operations or Rs 2200 crores every year! This has been going on since 1983-84 and has meant a loss of thousands of soldiers and tens of thousands of crores of rupees In 1989 a draft agreement was prepared with Pakistan for disengagement and pullback to positions occupied at the time Simla Pact was signed in 1972 Backtracking of the draft agreement meant narrow-minded pursuit of a course of action which bled us white over an icy wasteland Who benefited from this?

Corruption in high places is common knowledge But the impact of kickbacks on defence expenditure and foreign debt have not become part of our sensibilities In the 1988-92 period our weapon imports made us the largest importer of arms The magnitude of foreign debt due to arms imports can be estimated through comparison of the foreign trade data of the Commerce Ministry and RBI

Between 1991-92 and 1995-96 the Commerce Ministry data shows our trade gap widening from $ 1 55 billion to $ 4 53 billion Against this the RBI data shows the trade gap widening during the same period from $ 2 79 billion to $ 8 94 billion The difference is on account of three factors postal trade, aid imports, and defence import Of this defence alone accounts for 80 per cent Such being the case a comparison of the RBI data from 1990-91 to 1995-96 shows a cumulative trade deficit in six years of nearly $ 32 billion It will not be far-fetched to say that 40 per cent of this is due to military imports In other words, arms imports have contributed much to the burgeoning foreign debt Equally important is the part played by kickbacks

The PAC (1996-97) in its Thirteenth Report was

> distressed to find that the credit for imported stores and equipments valued at Rs 683 67 crores in 1307 cases could not be verified indicative of an atmosphere of non-accountability prevalent in store depots of Defence Services where audit officers are unable to verify whether the stores paid for, have actually been received fully and accounted for[1]

The CBI claimed that in the Rs 1300-crore HDW submarine deal 10-15 per cent of the cost was paid as kickbacks In other deals too the ratio would have been the same if not higher Military experts contended that the HDW submarine was a poor choice In the Rs 1200-crore Bofors deal there is evidence on record which suggests that the security angle advanced for purchasing the 155 mm gun was a fiction

All this only underlines the need for parliamentary control What lends urgency is also the evidence of non-utilisation and misuse of the resources allocated The Standing Committee on Defence (1996-97, First Report) pointed out that they

> are rather surprised that while on the one hand, the Ministry have been complaining about inadequacy of funds (they) have miserably failed in ensuring proper utilisation of the resources in the execution of new naval construction projects

And advocated

> proper utilisation of the meagre resources allocated, but also to avoid cost and time overruns

Even the Standing Committee on Home Affairs (1996-97) expressed concern that

> while additional allocation is sought to provide residential accommodation to more CPMF personnel, the approved outlays are not utilised to the optimum as an amount of Rs 10 34 crores had to be surrendered during 1995-96

And yet the Ministry asked for allocation of Rs 625 crores to meet the housing shortfall In other words, while we pamper our security forces, the authorities disregard building dwelling units for the jawans for which money was provided It is worth recalling that each time the "Armed Forces of the Union" are accused of committing atrocities much crocodile tears are shed That concern for the jawans is low is apparent from their utilisation within the country, something that has affected the morale and discipline of the forces And according to the Director-General of Armed Forces Medical Services, psychological problems faced by the jawans deployed in internal wars have increased

Indifference towards jawans is matched by unconcern for proper use of scarce resources For instance, the Army pays high price for 1100 items of spares and components bought from private parties There are reports that incorrect assessment has resulted in a stock build-up for 117 months or ten years against the standard practice of three months, resulting in piled up capital stocks worth Rs 190 crores and expenditure on their maintenance at Rs 35 crores Reportedly a CB point for motorcycle costing Rs 18 was being purchased for Rs 54, jeep repair kit costing Rs 25 at Rs 52, brake shoe lining for a one-tonne truck costing Rs 105 at Rs 165

In another instance highlighted by the CAG, communication facilities created in 1989 at a cost of Rs 122 crores could not be used because the bulk of the submarine fleet was not fitted with the antenna system to receive the message Again Rs 51 crores was sanctioned in 1989 for 'K' class submarines, but only Rs 9 crores was spent In 1995-96 Rs 40 crores worth of equipment imported for 'K' class submarines could not be used The CAG goes on to say that operational availability of 'K' class submarines fell due to "improper maintenance" and resulted in these blocking the naval dockyard Other naval vessels were refitted in commercial docks at an extra cost of Rs 3 crores In fact yet another instance the MOD signed a contract for 12 Tungushka surface-to-air missiles from Russia at a cost of Rs 450 crores of which only six were delivered These were found to be "re-conditioned" and not satisfactory Again orders worth $ 36 million were placed with a Yugoslav firm for procurement of 150 Tank Fire Control System Advance payment worth $ 11 million was made in July 1991 but no consignment has arrived

When resources are readily made available there is also a tendency to prefer costly short-cuts Take the Air Force which has continued to rely on expensive imports of fighter planes Given our burgeoning foreign debt not only is this uneconomic but also inadequate as this limits the number of units we can purchase Thus we had to restrict our purchase of Mirage 2000 and MIG 29s to 40 each As against this the cheaper option of upgradation (which has been successfully tried by China) has been ignored Surprisingly as 350 of our MIG 21s are being made obsolete, upgraded MIG 21s are being inducted as frontline fighters in several countries including Pakistan It defies commonsense that our decision-makers prefer the expensive option which increases our vulnerability rather than the option of self-reliance where defence is concerned Thus we are nowhere close to developing advanced jet trainer, light combat aircraft, battle tank, etc

Ignoring Threat from US

NOT only does the public remains unaware of the real sources of threat, the growing clout of the US over our economy and military escapes attention Today the US, its allies, and client states maintain troops, nuclear and other arsenal and bases in and around the Indian Ocean Thereby they exercise domination over sources of oil and natural gas as well as vital sea lanes. The US and its client state, Saudi Arabia, are engaged in a civil war in Afghanistan on the side of the Taliban in order to acquire Central Asian oil and gas Apart from this the US has arms-twisted India regularly on matters of economic policy It is pressurising India to remove customs barriers against food imports and has filed a case against India under Clause 18 (b) of the WTO But our government has responded timidly, mesmerised by foreign investment and lured by the carrot of strategic ties between India and the US with India playing a role in the Asia-Pacific region, obviously directed against China

The C-in-C of the US Pacific Command in course of his visit to India last January made it a point to talk about US policy vis-a-vis China as being one of "appeasement and containment", and expressed concern at China's transfer of "low grade armaments" to Myanmar This concern is echoed by the Annual Report of the MOD (1996-97) As a matter of fact the US has consistently opposed India's membership of APEC and under the aegis of the Missile Technology Control Regime has held up India's missile development programme

Moreover, in a move intended to increase our vulnerability vis-a-vis the US the two countries signed a Letter of Acceptance on submarine rescue facility whereby Indian submarines in "distress" can be rescued by the US This is the first such contract with a foreign country Also barring one incident the Indian Navy has not suffered any loss In order to provide rescue facility rescue equipment will be prepared after the US Navy experts visit Indian submarine bases It is worth remembering that in the Indo-US military exercises the Navy has played the prominent role Obviously our security policy works wonders by remaining invisible

Conclusion

ABSENCE of a policy and therefore of a critical public debate has meant that neither Parliament nor the public have any way of knowing how incorrect or exaggerated are the threat perceptions As a result rather than securing the life and liberties of the people, elevation of Pakistan as the single biggest source of threat continued unabated, possibilities of witch-hunting at home mounted, and diversion and misuse of resources became easy Fear of the "enemy within" fuels paranoia and the complicity of successive governments in the making of internal conflicts are forgotten Exaggerated threats, internal wars, and augmentation of military strength have sapped the energy of our people and reduced our capacity to withstand outside pressure

In order to arrest this development a written policy document accessible to the public is the very first step required This could bring about a measure of balanced conceptualisation of threat perceptions This would enable the democratic forces to push for prioritising security of the life and liberties of our people as being the pivot upon which all other securities are based This can ensure that the public spending cut is shared by all Military cutback is possible following Sino-Indian agreement on force reduction, unless the security apparatus invents a new scenario for treating China as an enemy As for insurgency, it can be solved through dialogue and negotiations within a democratic framework This would undercut the rationale for force augmentation

What is required is for Parliament to assert its constitutional pre-eminence Right now it is the bureaucracy, which unflinchingly served the British Raj and owes no allegiance to the public, that calls the shots A written security doctrine in whose formulations Parliament and the public contribute could easily result in saving scarce resources In fact it is possible to introduce a 25 per cent cut in military allocations in 1997-98 following among others the Fifth Central Pay Commission's suggestion to reduce manpower in para-military forces and the Army by 30 per cent over the next ten years Parliament can go further by reversing the encroachment by the Centre in the States' law and order domain, demanding status report every three months by the Central forces whenever deployed "in aid of civil power", and thereby restricting the use of the Central forces in "internal security" ■

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS (JULY 13-19, 1997)

NATIONAL

July 13

- Hundreds of Shiv Sainiks attack and damage in Mumbai the residence of Congress leader and Leader of Opposition in Maharashtra Legislative Council Chhagan Bhujbal Police is reported to have stood as mute spectators
- President Dr Shankar Dayal Sharma donates his collection of books and artefacts to Swaraj Bhawan, the newly constructed freedom movement memorial in Bhopal
- The Janata Dal in Bihar Assembly stakes its claim to form a ministry as Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav offers more sops to Jharkhand Autonomous Area Council in his effort to gain JMM support in securing confidence in his Rashtriya Janata Dal Ministry
- Prime Minister I K Gujral tells PTI in an interview that the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) is a "charade" and India is keeping its nuclear options "open till the world moves towards the abolition of nuclear weapons on a programmatic basis and not rhetorically"
- BJP President L K Advani, speaking at Ludhiana, demands resignation of I K Gujral on the ground that he was moving from "instability to greater instability"
- Congress President Sitaram Kesri asserts in New Delhi that relations with the United Front Government were "harmonious and friendly" after the exit of former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda

July 14

- Congress leaders from Maharashtra discussed the law and order situation in their state with Congress President Sitaram Kesri who leads them to call on the PM to demand that the Maharashtra Government be dismissed Union Home Minister Indrajit Gupta will visit Mumbai to assess the situation and give a report to the PM
- Chief Justice of India J S Verma makes the startling revelation in Court that he and his colleagues on the hawala bench had come "under persistent pressure" to withdraw He asserts, "these antics are not going to pay anyone
- Congress spokesman V N Gadgil announces that the Congress will abstain when CM Laloo Prasad Yadav faces vote of confidence to bail him out of the present predicament in Bihar Assembly
- DMK President M Karunanidhi says that he would pull out his ministers from the UF and support the Government from outside as the constituents were engaged in settling personal scores without concern for the people's mandate
- The Supreme Court decides not to go into the reasons for the transfer of former CBI Director Joginder Singh and castigates new Director R C Sharma for making statements when cases were still pending in the court

July 15

- Former Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir, G M Shah says allegations made against him by B K Nehru, the then Governor of the State, in his book *Nice Guys Finish Second*, that he "was quite notorious as wife-beater, it was alleged, and I gathered that there was considerable truth in this " are all "gossip and scandal"
- BJP President L K Advani's 59-day Swarna Jayanti Yatra ends at Delhi amidst acclaim by the leadership that the Yatra has galvanised party machinery and mobilised the people to vote for BJP in the next elections
- Environment activist Mahesh Chandra Mehta, a Supreme Court lawyer, is awarded the 1997 Magsaysay Award for public service He campaigned in 1984 for the preservation of the Taj Mahal, won damages for the victims of the 1985 gas leak in Bhopal and motivated the court to relocate 9,000 industries away from New Delhi

July 16

- The Union Government issues notification banning the installation and maintenance of direct-to-home (DTH) television service by any person in the country in order to regulate nature and content of the programmes and to prevent undesirable and objectionable telecasts
- Prime Minister I K Gujral cancels his visit to Malaysia and Singapore due to start on July 26 The Indian delegation to ASEAN regional forum meeting in Kuala Lumpur will now be headed by Finance Minister P Chidambaram
- Addressing a press conference in New Delhi after concluding his Yatra, BJP President L K Advani says "The road to New Delhi is a bit difficult but I am certain that we have nearly arrived"
- MLAs of the ruling Rashtriya Janata Dal and opposition BJP-Samata clash in the Bihar Assembly for the third day The Speaker suspends the opposition members, including the Leader of the Opposition, for five days and then gets them marshalled out
- Veteran Bihar Congress leader Dr Jagannath Mishra says the Congress decision to abstain during voting on the confidence motion would destroy the Party in the State Congress Vice-President Jitendra Prasada says "we had no choice We could not vote with the communal forces or with the forces of corruption"

July 17

- Inter-State Council decides to pool together all taxes and devolve 29 per cent of these to the states
- Police opens fire on demonstrators and kill one in Ahmedabad who came out on the streets to protest against desecration of Dr A.N Ambedkar's statue in Mumbai
- S. Jaipal Reddy of tells reporters, after prolonged discussions at the residence of the Prime Minister the UF standing Committee decides "not to give membership to the RJD but no view has been taken on the three ministers"
- International Monetary Fund, in its statement on Indian economy after the July 2 meeting of IMF representatives with the Indian officials, lists the essentials to maintain the momentum of its economic growth The IMF urges India to effect a substantial increase in petroleum product prices
- K R Narayanan is declared President elect of India He polled 956,290 votes while the only rival candidate

got 50,631 votes and lost his deposit

- Prime Minister Gujral assures Chief Ministers that Article 356 of the Constitution shall not be used to dismiss any state government

July 18

- Union Government announces its decisions on the Pay Commission Report It retains retirement age at 58, five-day working week and does not abolish overtime allowance But it allows a hefty hike in salaries, pensions, gratuity, dearness and house rent allowances of employees The Finance Ministry will notify shortly on the implementation specifying how much benefits will accrue to whom under what head
- Prime Minister Gujral waives Rs 8,500 crores loan extended to Punjab Government for fighting terrorism
- India secures UN Security Council's sanction to export 1,000 tones of tea in exchange for oil under the "oil for foods" programme
- Prime Minister Gujral, after his open house on Fridays, says he is ashamed to be PM listening to the woes and complaints of the common man

July 19

- Congress Treasurer Ahmad Patel writes to the Union Home Ministry that it was only due to "unintentional and administrative oversight" that it could not seek permission prior to accepting Rs 6 5 crore foreign donations
- US Embassy in New Delhi warns US citizens to be extra vigilant while moving around Delhi in view of militant threats
- Union Cabinet approves hike in maximum provident fund contribution and constitutes a Committee comprising Labour Minister T N Baalu, Finance Minister P Chidambaram and Agriculture Minister Chaturanan Mishra to examine how the workers of the sick units can be paid their dues
- Central Government employees and trade unions decide to go on an indefinite strike in September to protest against acceptance of pay commission recommendations which raises the gap between the lowest and highest paid
- Leader of Opposition and former PM Atal Behari Vajpayee tells reporters in Lucknow that they would demand explanation on Bofors probe and the Chief Justice's remarks that they were being pressurised in the hawala cases "Lot will happen" he says
- Air India Managing Director Brijesh Kumar writes formally to the Civil Aviation Ministry accusing his deputy Michael Mascarenhas and another official N C Padhi of serious irregularities in the signing of a 1994 wet-lease arrangement with Caribjet

INTERNATIONAL

July 13

- A new book *Liberty or Death, India's Journey to Independence and Division* by Patrick French quotes from personal diaries of the wartime Cabinet colleagues of U K Prime Minister Winston Churchill to establish that he hated India and he was responsible for denying food shipments and causing the Bengal famine
- Cambodia's strongman Hun Sen scores more victories over the forces loyal to his rival Prince Norodom Ranariddh and says the country must have free and fair elections King Narodom Sihanouk, ailing in Beijing is exercising a cautious neutrality
- New NATO entrants Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic agree in a meeting of their Defence Ministers in Budapest to coordinate their large-scale defence purchases in the future
- Kenyan Muslim activist Khalid Balala, on his return from a three-year exile in Germany, says in Nairobi that he would organise "a 10-million-people march in the streets of Nairobi within the next 15 days and either (President) Moi applies what we want or we will tell him bye-bye"

July 14

- Death toll in Bangladesh floods in the seven districts rises to 84 and epidemics of diarrhoea and other diseases spread to affect thousands of people
- Ejazul Haq, son of the Late President and Martial Law Supremo of Pakistan Zia-ul-Haq, says "if politicians close all the ways then the Army will have to do something" Only recently, Ejazul Haq refused the offer of a ministership from Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and risks action under the new anti-defection law
- Cambodian coup leader Hun Sen lashes out at ASEAN for refusing membership to Cambodia and says his government will withdraw its application for entry to the regional economic grouping
- Israel and Palestine Authority resume joint patrol to restore peace in the divided West Bank town of Hebron
- Catholic youths throw petrol bombs and stones at the police searching a housing estate where ingredients for home made bombs were found
- An anti-Castro flotilla sets cruise to the brink of Cuban waters just after Havana was hit by a rare series of bombings it blamed on the USA
- Police opens fire with live bullets after volleys of tear gas and rubber bullets fail to control students attacking the riot police in Nairobi (Kenya) and shouting "No Reforms, No Elections"
- Anti-racist militants fight against members of the extreme right National Front party during the Bastille Day parade in Toulon naval port in South France

July 15

- Dhaka is paralysed by a strike called by Bangladesh Islamic groups to protest against the poster sighted recently blaspheming the Prophet of Islam in the West Bank city of Hebron
- Hun Sen troops execute 35 supporters of Cambodia's ousted First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh
- UK Premier Tony Blair, after a 45-minute meeting with PLO President Yasser Arafat, pledges to pay "particular attention" to how Europe can assist in the West Asia Peace Process when Britain takes over the EU presidency next year
- An Orange Order hall is gutted in Ballfast Protestants say this is a slap in the face after the concessions they

made last week to accommodate Catholic feelings

- European Commission agrees to allow Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia and Estonia to join Cyprus for talks on entry into the European Union (EU) while Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Romania will each have contractual accession partnerships and prepare for membership at their own pace
- Nigerian Information Minister Walter Ofonagoro accuses an unnamed Western country of "driving a wedge between South Africa and Nigeria" and says "South Africa is at the Centre of anti-Nigerian Propaganda" and that "South Africa is a white country with a black head of state"

July 16

- An international panel of intellectuals voted British War-time leader Winston Churchill the most outstanding European of the 20th Century pushing ahead of Albert Einstein, Pablo Picasso, Pope John Paul II and Sigmund Freud
- Sri Lanka seeks Red Cross help to escort food ships to LTTE strongholds following the Tigers' attack on merchant vessels
- Former Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, in a message from London, criticises the murder of a Portuguese Embassy guard and says this is a slap in the face of the government as the murder occurred within hours of the announcement by the PM that terrorists would be tried in a special court She emphasizes that the "present situation demands" total response from all which is only possible through a national government
- Cambodia's royalist Funcinpec named Foreign Minister Ung Huot to succeed former First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh thus formalising his ouster by Hun Sen
- President Moi of Kenya meets Christian and Muslim religious leaders, agrees that the Constitution needs be amended and seeks their help in pacifying the students and opposition activists
- UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan introduces sweeping reforms in the UN set up, including guillotining of 1,000 jobs, to placate the US and make them pay the $ 1 0 billion which they owe to the UN in arrears
- Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Bullat Ecevit threatens to react sharply if entry of Cyprus in the EU weakens the position of Turkish Cypriots

July 17

- US Senate approves an amendment to resume "limited" economic aid to Pakistan which was suspended in 1990 in protest against Islamabad's nuclear weapons programme The amendment allows the US to provide overseas private investment corporation financing to American Companies doing business in Pakistan and to resume International Military Education and Training programme for Pakistan military officers in the US
- Cambodia's newly nominated First Prime Minister Ung Huot rebuffs US for not extending recognition to him and says "Our people have to decide, not America"
- Iraq President Saddam Husain calls for an Arab summit to save Palestine and Jerusalem "We must not allow Zionists to weaken the Arabs and the Palestinians", he says
- US Democrats say now they believe their Republican colleagues that China tried to influence the outcome of US elections but they doubt whether the plans were actually put into effect
- Crew of the Russian space station *Mir* is shifted to the docked spaceship *Soyuz* as the lights were cut off by mistake plunging the space station in darkness
- UK praises Secretary-General Kofi Annan's reform package as a real advance but US senators, including the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Sen Jesse Helms, express disappointment at the "remarkably modest" reforms

July 18

- Two measures aimed at cutting aid to India are introduced in the US Congress on human rights ground and on that of not voting enough times with the US in the United Nations
- US Ambassador to the UN Bill Richardson announces, "As a result of our review we can now agree in principle to have developing countries sit in the Council as new permanent members On offer are three seats likely to be shared by Asia, Africa and Latin America
- Burmese pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kye decides to attend a wreath-laying ceremony in Rangoon to mark Martyrs Day commemorating the 50th Anniversary of the assassination of her father General Aung San
- The government of the Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong issues a statement to say that demonstrations demanding separation of Taiwan or Tibet shall not be allowed
- British Northern Ireland Secretary Mo Mowlam says after her meeting with Irish Foreign Minister Ray Burke that they would not change their proposal on disarming the Irish Republican Army
- Three more ministers resign from the government of Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori joining their two colleagues who had resigned earlier over telephone espionage A 5,000-strong rally is held over the issue in Lima, the capital

July 19

- Sir James Goldsmith, the Anglo-French entrepreneur, founder of the Referendum Party in U K opposing England going whole hog with EU plans, incidentally, father-in-law of Pakistan cricketer turned politician Imran Khan dies of cancer in Southern Spain
- Burmese Leader Aung San Suu Kyi pays solemn tribute to her slain father Gen Aung San at his white marble mausoleum Food and robes were distributed to Buddhist monks
- Cambodian coup leader Hun Sen rejects mediation offers from ASEAN countries as the ousted First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh gives a call from Bangkok to the international community to isolate Hun Sen
- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Natanyahu says he will have to meet Yasser Arafat face to face to end the four-month long deadlock in the peace process
- Irish Republican Army (IRA) declares unequivocal ceasefire from midday July 20 enabling its political wing Sinn Fein to enter Northern Ireland peace negotiations to be resumed in Belfast on September 15 ■

Momentous Moments

They drew me apart by force
From my brethren even as foetus
They brewed in me the fright of a foe
Even as I started lisping
On them at another hearth
Only the tooth of wisdom said—
Land comes only next to man

How excited am I
At the rare chance of
Mixing with my distanced brethren!
I see with my eyes
Harappa and Mohenjodaro moving!
Gone were five millenniums
Gone was the faith of the five elements

Even in the clashing of cruel swords
I see the dream of peace blossoming

Caught in excitement of sharing views
Caught in anxiety that time stood still
That calligraphy which I can't make out,
Stands between us staring
Yet, come, let's speak heart to heart,
Come, let's with balmy looks cool our bodies
seared by hot winds of times

How do you do all of you?
Here we are dying of hunger and thirst,
Rotten to the core with scams
Prices and unemployment take a walk
High beyond the hills
Is it so with you, too?
Fear forever of Military?
Suppression entire of Civil Rights?
Freedom zeroed on women,
Minority races and subaltern faiths?
Is it State fuelling fanaticism?
Wait! Caste an added feather for us!
Royal houses and their heirloom politics
Donned veils of Democracy
Handful of vipers rule the land
Since swallows have flown off.
Now nuclear ravens with their beaks
Prey with wings of IMF and World Bank,
Arms markets start race wars,
The betrayed must cry alone!

Sister dear, weep no more
Look this way with strong heart!
Prem Chand is asking—
"Isn't my frail farmer well, yet?"
Sajjad Zaheer is demanding—
"Why is it still dim, the people's cultural revolution?"
Kishan Chandar is cautioning—
"Don't let go back to sleep
The villages awakened in Telangana."
Faiz Ahmed Faiz is crying—
"Morning won't be beautiful
Until Freedom At Night evils removed."
Sadat Hassan Manto is shouting—
"Stoke the fires of mankind
Ward off dark religious bigotry"
Sri Sri is suggesting—
"Breathe in life even into the gallows."
Kazi Nazrul Islam declares—
"War inevitable for the
welfare heaven of workers."

Come, let's welcome and share the
Heritage of fruitful common good
Let's fill our pens with the
Red Ink of their ideals
Let's recall together
Our forefathers of 1857 striking a common enemy
Shall we forget
Gadar heroes and the Jalianwala Bagh?
Come, let's remember
Bombay labourers, Moplah farmers and Chittagong fighters
Alluri moving with his bow at the enemy bon with a vow
The Red shirt volunteers holding Peshawar in fist
The Garhwali soldiers
Symbols of secularism and patriotism
Ah! Each new year he gives us a renewed energy
Bhagat Singh, flaming torch of revolution,
Making his sacrifice meaningful
Ah! That Red Flag hoisted by Amir Hyder Khan
Flies still high in the South of India!

See, my dear brother!
Time is a continuum, life endless
Clouds that cover the sun of collective culture shall go
Come, let's dream of light
Let them be owners
Those with their blood and sweat built
Houses and culture, both yours and mine!
Let's leave it to future generations
The idea of one Family

Let's meanwhile clear our houses of
Thorny bushes of mutual hatred
Poisonous prickly plants of fanaticism
Let's clean them all for ever
Come, dear brother
Let's wash with tears
The bloody wounds caused by History

Listen now to the hearts in solace!
Aren't they beating in rhythm
Peace and equality?
Let not these great moments go waste!

Divi Kumar

(Translated by 'Mo')

Posted at CPSO in New Delhi on July 25/26, 1997 Delhi Postal REGD No DL-11037/97
Licence No U-(C)-20/97 Licensed to Post without Prepayment Regd with Registrar of Newspapers of India under No RN 7064/62

There's a
little bit
of SAIL
in everybody's
LIFE.

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Edited and published by Sumit Chakravartty *for* Perspective Publications Private Ltd, 1E/12, "Sewak House" (First Floor), Jhandewalan Extension, New Delhi-110055 Tel 7516763, 7516893 Fax 7519838 *Printed at* New Delhi Printers, 20/7 Old Market, West Patel Nagar, New Delhi-110008 *Editor* Sumit Chakravartty *Editorial Adviser* Nikhil Chakravartty
General Manager Praveen Mehta *Executive Manager* Jasjit Kay Nagra

Mainstream

VOL XXXV No 34 August 2,1997 Rs 7

ARUN GHOSH
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SUJATA SINGH
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SIDDHARTH VARADARAJAN
Behind the Events in Cambodia

M.J. VINOD
Changing Global Scenario and India-Pakistan Relations

SHARAD PATIL
Invade Bihar with Vihar

RANDHIR SINGH'S TREATISE—"COLLAPSE IN SOVIET UNION : THE IMPACT"

Confusion Allround

One cannot say if the inevitable has happened for one could never be sure of the moves of Laloo Prasad Yadav But definitely the long arm of the law has caught up with him However, that this has happened only after his master-stroke of entrusting his home State of Bihar to his better half courtesy the RJD MLAs whose unquestioned loyalty he commands, speaks volumes of the state of affairs in the country today

There can be no two opinions that corruption being a major problem in contemporary India any effort to relegate the struggle against this menace into the background cannot be countenanced by all those who have the interests of the nation at heart That is precisely why we have not hesitated in these columns to take the Prime Minister to task for his pusillanimity in dealing with Laloo Yadav facing mega-scale corruption charges in the food scam It is that pusillanimity which has brought the very institution of the Prime Minister into disrepute and lowered its authority Not that one would ever wish to see the Prime Minister's Office becoming the breeding ground of authoritarianism as had happened during Indira Gandhi's tenure as the PM But that is no reason to bring down the stature of the office itself Gujral can justifiably be accused of having done just that even if he did not do so by design but as a prisoner of indecision that betrayed, above all, an inherent temperamental weakness unbecoming of a Prime Minister

As for Laloo Yadav, his master-stroke did take the Opposition by surprise in Bihar So did the tactical steps adopted by his wife Rabri Devi, the first woman CM of the State, to disarm her political adversaries Yet what cannot be lost sight of is the manner in which Laloo has sought to perpetuate family rule And this by the once-trusted lieutenant of Jaya Prakash Narayan one of whose primary objectives was to ensure probity in public life! Those who have unequivocally opposed Indira Gandhi for her singleminded endeavours to lay the foundation of dynastic rule, cannot but be aghast at the brazen manner in which Laloo anointed Rabri Devi as his successor

However, there is no gainsaying that influential sections of public opinion—wherein the media occupy a prominent place—have betrayed an elitist bias while castigating Laloo on this score Their reactions would have been markedly different if the husband-wife duo of Bihar had come from a different socio-economic background The distinct approach to Sonia Gandhi's 'position' in our political life brings out this bias in sharp relief And this, needless to underline, would reinforce the casteist approach to politics Laloo is playing to the hilt and to his advantage in Bihar This may well be reflected once again in the elections in the State whenever they are held

But Laloo Yadav winning hands down at the hustings despite vigorous anti-Laloo propaganda by his opponents would not *per se* dim the significance of the battle against corruption It would only underscore the need to fight the likes of Laloo without the prejudice of the upper caste Whether it is Laloo, Mulayam or Mayawati-Kanshi Ram—they do highlight the dynamics of evolution in the slow but steady process of transformation of our caste-divided society With all its contradictions this movement is not without its positive content That reality must be acknowledged even while conducting an uncompromising struggle against corruption in high places Hence the imperative necessity to repudiate that elitist bias at the earliest

The aforementioned elitist bias is just one manifestation of the prevailing allround confusion on the national plane The recent outbursts of Harkishan Singh Surjeet, the CPI-M's accredited national leader, against the PM

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mirrors the same confusion in a different form There is much strength in AICC spokesman VN Gadgil's observation that such statements clearly demonstrate Surjeet's loss of mental balance Not only the United Front constituents, but even Surjeet's own comrades in the CPM, have been taken aback by the virulence of his attack on Gujral while voicing his preference for Mulayam This is attributable mainly to petty political infighting that Surjeet has sought to camouflage by invoking high-sounding principles His belated attempts to wriggle out of the inconvenient situation by "explaining" that he was "quoted out of context" have only heightened the embarrassment caused by his remarks

Meanwhile, having becoming increasingly conscious of his growing isolation from the people in general on the question of Laloo and corruption, our distinguished PM has lately begun to speak of launching a mass movement against the scourge However, how, Prime Minister? That question elicits no reply But such queries are not supposed to warrant cogent answers Because after all politicians are entitled to enjoy the privilege of making hollow rhetorical statements for consumption of the gullible alone, aren't they?

In the midst of such confusion the ruling conglomerate and its supporting partner (which by its open support to Laloo's successor has only magnified its opportunism) continue to undermine their prestige before the public at large as the country's real problems in the social, political and economic spheres go on acquiring frightening proportions But then who has the time and/or the inclination to ponder over and introspect?

July 30 S C

Prejudice and Power-Play

ARUN GHOSH

There is an element of the ridiculous in the current political process in India, and yet, the role of the English media in the country, in the entire process does not deserve any congratulation

Let us get down to brasstacks One cannot justify Laloo Prasad Yadav's actions over the past couple of months, respect for institutions, respect for healthy conventions, respect for the rule of law do not appear to have been prominent in his actions (or statements) ever since Governor Kidwai formally authorised his prosecution by the CBI As many statesmen have observed, he should have stepped down as soon as Governor Kidwai gave his official authorisation to his prosecution

It is true, nobody should be presumed to be guilty until he is legally convicted And, in the past, the judiciary has dismissed many of the plaints filed by the CBI, and the charge against Laloo Yadav may not also stick, if one were to go by a recent statement by a senior Bihar official, quoted later Nonetheless, the fact remains that Laloo Yadav delayed his resignation too long

Yet, the orchestration of vituperation, indeed, of downright malicious quips appear to be the order of the day insofar as the English language media are concerned Consider, for example, the following extracts from the 'Capital Notebook' in *The Times of India*, New Delhi, dated July 27, 1997

Q When Laloo Prasad Yadav was told that Marie Antoinette had said, "If they don't have bread, let them eat cakes", what did he say?

A If they don't have *roti*, let them eat *rabri*

Q What is the relationship between Laloo Prasad Yadav and Rabri Devi?

A She is his *rabri* stamp

Some people may consider these jokes funny, but they are in extremely poor taste, to say the least Stronger condemnation of such elitist disdain would not be out of place

Consider, on the other hand, the testimony of a non-Behari IAS officer who has served the Bihar Government for 26 years (vide, Rashida Bhagat in the *Business Line* dated July 26, 1997) Since the *Business Line* is not read by many Delhi-ites it is worth reproducing extensive portions of the highly illuminating analysis of the problems of Bihar by this IAS officer (currently serving as Secretary, Rural Development) According to him,

> it is not just a matter of scams it is a total collapse of the administrative system *As officers we have been shirking our responsibility political interference and the law and order situation is made much more of than what is actually there* And it is actually a cloak to hide your own inefficiency (emphasis added)
>
> I have put in 26 years of service in Bihar and I cannot cite a single instance of political interference
>
> What is political interference? every MP, MLA or Minister has the right to pick up the telephone and say "Mr Kang, this man is having this problem Will you please look into it?" That is not political interference
>
> And believe me, 99 per cent of the phone calls are for genuine work Because the culture is so developed that people feel that nothing will be done till you have a *sifarish* or a *pairavi* (recommendation)
>
> We talk of resources of Bihar mineral resources and so on

The author, a distinguished economist, is a former Member, Planning Commission of India

> But over which resources does Bihar have control? Over iron ore we have no control, over coal we have no control Whatever our advantages were, those were killed by freight equalisation, and the telescoping of coal prices Do you know that coal was cheaper in Ludhiana than in Bihar?
>
> In the last 30-40 years, the entire system was in the hands of feudal landlords Politicians, officers and even police officers were mainly from a feudal background
>
> Everybody is blaming Laloo Yadav for the State going bankrupt I will tell you the people you should blame Blame the late Kedar Pandey He was the Chief Minister in 1972 Blame Mr Jagannath Mishra These are the people who are really responsible In Bihar we spend 150 per cent of our revenue on salaries and wages
>
> Somebody has to take drastic action Now with Mr VS Dubey becoming the Finance Commissioner (since July 1995), the Budget has improved Because the systems collapsed, the scam took place Earlier, *the Finance Department hardly bothered to look at the budget papers we prepared* (emphasis added)
>
> Everyday, in the Kanpur-Lucknow belt, 30 people get killed Even local papers do not write about it But two people getting killed in Bihar makes national headlines
>
> Unfortunately, Bihar has had a very bad record on corruption because people take money and do not do the work But I would say that Bihar is backward in corruption too compared to forward States such as Punjab and Haryana
>
> One of the major reasons, apart from the failure of bureaucracy, was that our Chief Minister always looked up to Delhi One man who did not do this and could have done a lot was Mr Laloo Yadav but he failed because of his total lack of administrative capability

The quotations are lengthy, but there is a lot more, and readers should go back to the original

But the purpose of the long extracts from a statement made by a senior serving officer—even if one were to partially discount his statements as being "motivated"—is to suggest (a) that Central policies have much to do with progress (or the lack thereof) in different regions of the country, (b) that coupled with Central apathy, there is also media misrepresentation of the true state of affairs, as well as the gut problems in different parts of the country, and (c) that Laloo Prasad Yadav's main failing has been his lack of administrative capability Ignorance is no excuse for wrong actions, yet is it possible that senior officers failed him? The civil service has both a staff function and a line function, and perhaps, Laloo Prasad Yadav has been let down on both counts

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THERE are some deeper issues involved Politics is, after all, a game of power The current tirade against Laloo Yadav can be traced back to former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda, who has transparently endeavoured to see Laloo's downfall But, one is both surprised and pained to see the Left—especially the CPM—completely toe-ing this line The Left ideology should be based on the 'economic' basis of social formations, *manipulative politics* can result only in very short term gains, if even that

If Laloo Yadav is found guilty of aiding and abetting corruption, let the legal authorities decide and put him behind bars But, equally, is there an Ethics Committee of Parliament in India? What do elder statesmen and major political parties have to say about Sukh Ram cheerfully attending Parliament, after a CBI raid on his house found Rs 3 5 crores in cash, and much other property beyond his known sources of income? Sukh Ram, incidentally, did not deny the presence of the cash, he has only stated he was holding the cash on behalf of the (Congress) party, which was promptly denied by the then party Treasurer, Sitaram Kesri

Second, one might raise eyebrows at Rabri Devi's elevation to the post of Chief Minister of Bihar Let us also recognise that the Bihar RJD legislature party duly chose her for the post Also, did anyone raise his voice when Indira Gandhi virtually chose her son as the heir-apparent? Were due processes gone through in the traumatic period when Indira Gandhi was assassinated? On what grounds did the then President of India invite the late Rajiv Gandhi to take over? Was there even a meeting of the Congress Parliamentary Party? On what basis do senior leaders prostrate themselves before Mrs Sonia Gandhi? What is her claim to bless one or the other in the Congress party? Essentially, we still are a feudal society

Again, we the elite of this country deem Rabri Devi's elevation to the Chief Ministership of Bihar, improper We deem Mayawati's elevation in UP similarly, but there the BJP is behind her, the same BJP is up in arms in Bihar, and wants the imposition of President's Rule On what grounds? And, *after Laloo has resigned, what is his hold over the party*? And, if there *is* a hold, does it not indicate that *he* is the most popular person in Bihar? If we believe in democracy, we must allow the Bihar legislature to decide on the issue

As a tailpiece, one should add that one may well find that Rabri Devi, with her womanly instincts, turning out to be a better administrator than Laloo was But that is a non-issue The issue is are we, in India, prepared to allow the people of each State to decide their future? In this context, one must say that happily, Prime Minister Gujral did not deem it fit to impose President's Rule in Bihar, despite intense pressure not only from the Opposition but also from within the United Front

And, if perchance elections are held in Bihar in the not-too-distant future, one would find out the preferences of the people of Bihar in regard to who should lead them One should not be surprised if Laloo were to confound all his critics by returning to power with a thumping majority ■

Can India afford "Sachs' Therapy"?

PRAFUL BIDWAI

Why is Mrs Margaret Thatcher, who has long glorified thrift, donating £ 1 9 million to Cambridge to establish professorship in "free enterprise" economics? An aide says she is "concerned that the practice of capitalism, particularly in Russia exemplifies the capitalism of the cowboy This chair is designed to teach that capitalism does have a moral and legal basis "

Whatever the truth of the last sentence, Mrs Thatcher clearly recognises the shocking reality of Russia's cowboy or robber capitalism If one thing is to be held responsible for ensuring that outcome from the collapse of communism, it is doctrinaire "free market" economics, backed by multilateral banks, and propounded by Harvard's Jeffrey Sachs, "shock therapy's" principal author Sachs' dogmas have, as we shall see, wreaked devastation comparable in scale to Stalin's forced collectivisation, or Mao's Great Leap Forward

What could be more insulting to the Indian public than that the same Sachs should be invited by its own government to advise it? It should be embarrassing enough that a foreign national with no particular acquaintance with this complex economy should be writing our policies, when any number of world-class Indian economists are available It is even more shameful that the government should do this of its own volition at least, the Russians didn't have a choice

Shock Therapy

LEAVE aside national pride, which our elite, in any case, reserves for the nuclear option and Kashmir What Sachs stands for is unalloyed primitive capitalist theology, or market fundamentalism which, equating economics with natural science, posits perfect knowledge In this voodoo economics, there is perfect competition, supply-demand equilibrium and optimal allocation of resources All governments need to do is "get prices right", and "rein in public spending, give private sector a firm greenback, then stand back and let it roar"

What "shock therapy" did in Russia was just this sudden "freeing" of prices (food prices quintupled overnight), wholesale liquidation of old systems of production and exchange, "freeing of labour markets" (read, mindless enterprise closure), indiscriminate financial liberalisation, and selective handover of state firms to "entrepreneurs" Agricultural output fell by two-fifths in two years Seven years on the GDP is one-third lower In some years, for example 1993, industrial production plummeted by 25 per cent Meanwhile, unemployment leapt and inflation soared to the three-digit level The quick "transition" to "free market and democracy" and "impending take-off" never occurred Fly-by-night operators established new banks and made off with the public's savings A criminalised bourgeoisie burgeoned, partly drawn from the old *nomenklatura*, which proceeded to grab sector after profitable economic sector Smuggling, blackmarketeering and brigandage became Russia's most lucrative activity As billions of roubles were held back in salaries due to workers, mafia capitalism flourished A struggle now rages over who will control state property, including energy conglomerate Gazprom (estimated worth, up to $ one trillion)

Horrific Effects

THE human effects of this have been horrific Housing, education and basic health care, once available to the vast majority of Russians, stand virtually withdrawn, making life nasty, brutish and short for the millions Today, half of all Russians live in abject poverty, which had once been abolished Real incomes are 40 per cent below 1991 levels Per capita calorie intake has fallen by 32 per cent to just 2250

Russia's bottomless economic collapse has produced crime, unrest, and alcoholism Health officials say the Russians are "dying like flies" (240,000 have already perished) from contaminated vodka (68 per cent of it substandard) now made in "free" private "enterprises" AIDs looms large with 800,000 HIV cases expected in three years Tuberculosis is raging out of control Today, barely half of Russian males at 16 can expect to live till 60—a situation worse than 100 years ago

Russia's once-mighty Army is in dire straits, its budget halved, and with lakhs of soldiers brutalised by the Chechen war, homeless, and wandering the streets (Last year, 526 committed suicide) Nuclear installations, never safe, have become a huge liability and sites of theft As crime grows, one in five Russians carries firearms on a daily basis there are 1000 contract killings a year Amidst this mayhem, Russia has comprehensively failed to build democratic institutions The Duma is powerless, the President a virtual dictator The constitutional machinery and higher judiciary have little autonomy A coterie of corrupt bureaucrats and financial oligopolists concentrates all decision-making

(Continued on page 38)

Politics of Pay Package

SUJATA SINGH

Politics and economics are inseparable, it is generally believed[1] However, with the announcement of the Pay Package the government has proved that they can be treated as separate Avoiding decisions likely to have adverse repercussion, the government has deferred making hard choices Even its "employee friendly" package has been received with mixed feelings by a large group of employees

The government improved on the recommendations of the Fifth Pay Commission by raising the minimum starting pay from Rs 2440, suggested by the Commission to Rs 2540 Other categories of employees who received a better deal from what was recommended by the Pay Commission include Armed Forces personnel, policemen, scientific officers and civilian staff on lower grades All these will add up to an additional burden of Rs 10,300 crores to its annual wage bill The Fifth Pay Commission had estimated an additional expenditure of Rs 8800

Major Departures from the Pay Commission

THE government has made some major departures from the recommendations of the Commission that need to be closely examined These include the government's reluctance to come up with a clear-cut policy on downsizing the government, an issue which has been entrusted to a private consultancy group comprising retired top officials The second relates to the raising of the retirement age from the present 58 to 60 years The third concerns the government's non-acceptance of the Commission's recommendation to abolish overtime allowance

The terms of reference of the Fifth Pay Commission were much wider, when compared to the previous Pay Commissions They included an examination of work methods and work environment, together with rationalisation and simplification of procedures with a view to optimising the size of the government machinery

Keeping this in view, the Commission pointed out the rate of proliferation of government departments As against 35 Ministries and departments in 1962, the number rose to 50 in 1972, and finally to 81 Ministries and departments at present Despite the rethoric of economic reforms, five new departments were carved out from existing Ministries at the Centre in 1995

The Commission found the expansion of the government to be disproportionate to the increase in workload when it compared the present position to that which prevailed in 1948 Whereas there were eight posts of Secretaries, 18 departments and a total workforce of 14 40 lakhs in 1948, today the strength of Secretaries is as high as 92, with 79 departments and a workforce of more than 41 lakhs

The Commission's suggestion for reinventing the government emphasised steps for delayering so as to reduce delays, small, business-like desks in place of unwieldy sections, developing the Group 'D' personnel as multi-skilled functionaries, and computerisation of office work[2]

Measures for downsizing the number of employees included abolishing the backlog of 3 5 lakh vacant posts, a freeze on further employment of junior staff, together with a sharp cutback in the intake of executives It emphasised the need for a perspective manpower plan to bring about a reduction of numbers by 30 per cent over a ten-year period It also suggested retirements under the Voluntary Retirement Scheme with the golden handshake, as well as compulsory retirement of those found corrupt and incompetent[3]

It is highly unlikely that the private consultancy group will come up with a magic formula Even if it does, the present government has too many masters to please which will prevent it from taking strong measures in this matter That we are still struggling with the basics after all the debate on 'restructuring' and 'reinventing' the government, is a sad commentary on us Given the fact that the Pay Commission showed special concern for maintaining the unique status of the IAS, it is doubtful whether the consultants, who are retired Secretaries to the Government of India, would suggest anything bitter for at least the higher levels of government The Commission went to the extent of suggesting that the government restore the earlier system of examination wherein there were additional papers for the IAS/Indian Foreign Service[3]

Retirement Age

THE Pay Commission and government parted company when it came to raising the retirement age from the present 58 to 60 years The case built up by the Commission in this matter was quite weak to start with It surveyed the situation in other countries like the United States, Italy, Argentina, Denmark and Norway, where it found the retirement age to vary between 65

(Continued on page 38)

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Behind the Events in Cambodia

SIDDHARTH VARDARAJAN

Contrary to what is being explicitly said by Western observers and indirectly implied by the US and countries of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the unfolding events in Cambodia cannot strictly be labelled a 'coup' What actually happened in the first week of July is that Prince Norodom Ranariddh—Cambodia's First Prime Minister and leader of the Royalist party, FUNCINPEC—fled the country while co-Prime Minister Hun Sen, leader of the Cambodian Peoples' Party (CPP), arranged for the nomination of his replacement As matters stand, Foreign Minister Ung Huot of the FUNCINPEC, is shortly to be confirmed by Cambodia's National Assembly as Prince Ranariddh's replacement In short, as Ung Huot himself has argued at the recent ASEAN Foreign Ministers' meeting in Kuala Lampur, every structure of constitutional authority—parliament, the judicial council and the monarchy—remains intact And the Cambodian authorities insist that national elections slated for 1998 will not be delayed as a result of the July turmoil

To say that, however, is not to claim that the Cambodian political scene is pacific and devoid of contradictions, or to deny that Hun Sen did not take military steps to bring matters to a head Indeed, for about ten days after the former First Prime Minister's exit, units of the Cambodian Army were ranged against pro-Ranariddh forces in and around Phnom Penh But the absence of any significant resistance either by the FUNCINPEC loyalists or by the public at large suggests that Hun Sen is on a strong wicket and that the self-exiled Prince's plight is attracting far less sympathy inside Cambodia than it is outside He has, of course, won the support of Sam Rainsy, the former FUNCINPEC Finance Minister and now leader of the Khmer National Party, who had joined together with Ranariddh under the banner of the 'National United Front' in February 1997 He also presumably still enjoys the backing of those factions of the Khmer Rouge that he had tried to integrate with his party

The roots of the present crisis go back to the Paris peace accord of 1991 The 1991 agreement was intended to bring about an end to the civil war which plagued Cambodia ever since the Heng Samrin-led CPP ousted the genocidal Pol Pot regime in 1979 with Vietnamese military support That was the era of the bipolar division, with China opportunistically siding with the US Fearing the growing influence of the erstwhile Soviet Union, China and the US started providing assistance to the Khmer Rouge

From 1979 to 1991, individual ASEAN members like Thailand actively assisted China and the US in ensuring that lethal military supplies were safely delivered to Pol Pot's forces Though Washington claimed it only gave aid to the Khmer Rouge's allies —the so-called 'Non-Communist Resistance' of Prince Sihanouk's FUNCINPEC and Son Sann—and not to Pol Pot himself, the US Congress' General Accounting office later revealed that the government had no way of ensuring US aid did not go to the Khmer Rouge It noted that "serious abuses and diversions of assistance" had occurred, though "the details of these abuses remain classified by the State Department"

Throughout this period, the UN General Assembly, at the Western bloc's urging, voted consistently in favour of Cambodia's seat at the UN being retained by Pol Pot Though the Khmer Rouge did not succeed in overthrowing the CPP regime, they did manage to retain control of provinces like Pailin and Phnom Malai, rich in gems and timber resources Once the Soviet Union ended its military support for Vietnam and the Vietnamese in turn withdrew their forces from Cambodia, the stage was set for a negotiated end to the civil war After sustained talks in Jakarta and Paris, agreement was finally reached for the UN to supervise multi-party elections Accordingly, the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) was set up under the provisions of Chapter VI of the UN Charter

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FROM the start of the UNTAC's mission, it was clear that the West was rooting for the FUNCINPEC The UN actively assisted Prince Ranariddh's election campaign, ostensibly in order to counter the alleged misuse of the state machinery by Hun Sen's CPP The 1993 election result was close— the FUNCINPEC won 45 per cent of the vote while the CPP won 38 per cent—and King Sihanouk, as head of state, worked out a power-sharing agreement whereby the two men would share the Prime Ministership and control of specific Ministries.

The relationship between the FUNCINPEC and the CPP was not without strains however, and tensions grew as the 1998 elections drew closer Over the past year, three issues came to the fore First, the CPP wanted to introduce a law preventing persons with dual citizenship from contesting the elections Since many FUNCINPEC leaders—including Prince Ranariddh—have Cambodian and French citizenship—they bitterly opposed the move and the proposal was eventually dropped

Secondly, an agreement over district power-sharing cropped up The FUNCINPEC saw the CPP making gains at its expense and feared the implications of this for the general elections In March 1996, Prince Ranariddh denounced the CPP at the FUNCINPEC's First National Congress He said he was tired of being Hun Sen's "puppet" and threatened that he would resign in order to force early elections In June that year, Hun Sen attacked the Prince at a plenum of the CPP's Central Committee and tensions were cooled only after the intervention of King Sihanouk and Malaysia's Foreign Minister, Abdullah Badawi

Thirdly, and most crucially, sensing that the political tide was turning against him, Prince Ranariddh started cultivating the Khmer Rouge as a way of undermining the CPP in the countryside Last August, Ieng Sary was the first senior Khmer Rouge leader to be won over Unknown to Hun Sen, the FUNCINPEC's military commander, General Nhek Bun Chhay had been conducting secret negotiations with him for several months in collusion with the Thai Government When the news became public, the CPP leader tried to make the best of the situation Ieng Sary brought 3000 soldiers with him and his defection really did weaken the Khmer Rouge But in recent months, when Prince Ranariddh moved to rehabilitate Khieu Samphan, another Khmer Rouge leader, Hun Sen put his foot down Khmer Rouge soldiers were being inducted into the FUNCINPEC and there was evidence that arms were being stockpiled Fearing the worst, the Army set up a cordon around the city and, eventually, moved against elements of the FUNCINPEC it thought were colluding with the Khmer Rouge

It is unfortunate that countries like the US—which remain officially committed to bringing Khmer Rouge leaders to trial for crimes against humanity—should turn a blind eye to Prince Ranariddh's dalliance with the genocidal militia Perhaps the US feared what will emerge about its own support for the Khmer Rouge were Pol Pot really to be placed on trial As *The New York Times* helpfully suggested in an editorial, one way of getting around this problem is for any future trial to be restricted to "crimes committed inside Cambodia during the four horrific years of Khmer Rouge rule" and not to those committed when Pol Pot was supported by the US and its allies

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It is significant that at its recent conference in Kuala Lampur, the ASEAN has formally decided not to admit Cambodia as a member Expansion of the South-East Asian alliance will be limited to Myanmar and Laos while Phnom Penh has been asked to sort out its current political crisis before applying again In a clear departure from their previous policy of 'recognising states, not governments', ASEAN Foreign Ministers went out of their way to insist that they still considered Prince Ranariddh to be Cambodia's head of government

The ASEAN, however, does not seem to have taken the Chinese factor into the equation Though Beijing was once the principal backer of the Khmer Rouge and FUNCINPEC, there is evidence that the Chinese leadership has of late been drawing closer to Hun Sen China was irritated with Prince Ranariddh's friendliness towards Taiwan and the inroads Taiwa-nese businesses were making in Cambodia but its desire to build better ties with Phnom Penh was of a piece with its attempts at drawing closer to Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar Even though China invaded Vietnam in 1979, relations between the two states are quite cordial now Jiang Zemin was the guest of honour at the Vietnamese Communist Party's Congress last year and trade between the two countries has already crossed the one billion dollar mark China is actively pursuing close economic links between its Guanxi province and the Vietnamese province of Guang Ninh across the border

In April 1996, General Zhang Wan-nian, chief of the PLA General Staff, visited Cambodia and signed a deal for one million dollars of military aid The following July, Hun Sen visited Beijing and had meetings with President Jiang Zemin and Premier Li Peng Apart from trade, fraternal relations were established between the CPP and the Communist Party of China The proximity between the two regimes is reflected today in China's refusal to comment adversely on the Cambodian crisis and on the subtle pressure Beijing is exerting on King Sihanouk to take a benign view of Hun Sen's actions

China views Cambodia as a useful place to relocate production facilities for exports to the US and ASEAN And just as the ASEAN sees expansion to Myanmar and the former socialist states of Indo-China as a way of countering Chinese influence, China is trying to do the reverse That is why the ASEAN's holier-than-thou attitude to Hun Sen will prove ultimately to be self-defeating The more Hun Sen is spurned, the closer he will align Cambodia with China In a sense, this is also what the US fears, which is why Washington's reactions, though critical, have begun to assume a more conciliatory tone in recent days

One last point remains to be made Some analysts have begun blaming the UN for not having disarmed Cambodia's factions prior to supervising the 1993 elections The argument is that it is only because the CPP was heavily armed that it was able to secure a power-sharing agreement with the FUNCINPEC after having lost the elections Apart from the fact that the UNTAC's mission was armed with a chapter VI mandate—which does not authorise the use of force except under very narrowly defined rules of engagement—this criticism is wrong on another point it forgets what happened during the UN's botched intervention in Somalia There, it was precisely the aggressive attempts of the US against one of the factions—General Mohammad Farah Aideed's United Somali Congress—that led to a huge upsurge in fighting and the death of hundreds of civilians in aerial attacks by US and UN forces The lesson of both Somalia and Cambodia for the UN is simple the task of nation-building should be left to the people of that nation and any attempt to impose a 'solution' from outside, however well-intentioned, is bound eventually to unravel ■

Changing Global Scenario and India-Pakistan Relations

M J. VINOD

Introduction

When one looks back into half-a-century of India-Pakistan relations there are both feelings of pessimism and optimism for the future The former is the result of years of confrontation and the latter reflects the changing priorities and the imperative of cooperation in a changing world The time has come to take stock of the present trends and future directions in India-Pakistan relations The story over the last fifty years has been one of misunderstandings, misperceptions and even war on three occasions Deep-rooted mistrust and a mythology of hatred have contributed to the crippling of relations between the two countries Systemic and regional factors have also influenced India-Pakistan relations over the years Both the countries have also repeatedly got caught in a *'zero sum/score card'* mentality in their dealings with major powers

In the past India-Pakistan parleys have had the tendency to cool off at the slightest provocation Solutions to bilateral disputes still remain elusive, and internally both the countries have to contend with the challenging task of nation-building The time has come for India and Pakistan to seriously think of ways to deal with one another They have paid, are paying a heavy price for persisting with the cleavage New Delhi and Islamabad need to give serious thought to the implications of continued hostility A clear and objective assessment of India-Pakistan relations is in order

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Defining the Challenge

THE end of the East-West confrontation has led to a realignment of forces of unthinkable magnitude. Both economic necessity and military stalemate combined to produce the end of the Cold War The cross-current of events has been so strong that the Cold War 'power paradigm' has been completely restructured The economic revolution of the 1980s can be tied to the collapse of the Cold War Three major trends were clearly discernible

- the internationalisation of economic activity,
- the global privatisation of the international economy, and
- the high technology revolution

As a result almost every state was forced to reassess its strategies—both internal and external Countries are passing through a phase of adjustment The impact of these developments are increasingly being witnessed in different regions of the world and South Asia is no exception India and Pakistan cannot remain immune from this *process* of worldwide change or the *consequences of this change*

India has been the largest functioning democracy in the world The Indian experience has shown that democracy has to be accompanied by economic well-being of the people Both democracy and well-being can lay the long-term foundation for stability Much remains to be done in the realm of socio-economic, political and cultural development The priority areas include. population control, illiteracy, poverty, disease, maldistribution of wealth, external debt crises, shortage of foreign exchange, high inflation, linguistic and ethnic tensions, religious fundamentalism of various shades, environmental degradation Added to this has been the problem of institutional decay which brings into focus the question of 'leadership' and 'governance' Both India and Pakistan have to face daunting tasks in terms of inter-state and intra-state conflicts Some of these conflicts are old, deep and have multiple causes related to history, culture and religion and even geopolitics While trying the adjust with the new global realities, they have to also grapple with these internal political and security problems

The Response

IN the new international environment neither India nor Pakistan can afford to ignore the winds of change They can do so only at their own peril The promise and pitfalls of the prolonged quest for durable relations between India and Pakistan have now once again been brought to the fore with the resumption of talks between the two countries There is need for a more intensive dialogue between the two. They have to structure their relationship on the basis of widely-accepted principles, and pursue them in as open and transparent a manner as possible. Both the countries stand to gain from regional peace and stability New Delhi on its part has to lay to rest certain fears in the region that emanate from its sheer size, and reassure the countries in South Asia that it stands for their territorial integrity and development

Both India and Pakistan need to pave the way for a *'multi-layered framework of cooperation'* The following steps can be considered

- The leadership of both the countries have to display greater farsightedness and courage in dealing with each other
- Both India and Pakistan have to develop a *mutual interest* in building a tension-free environment in South Asia
- Both the countries have to take concrete steps to increase *mutual confidence* and *accommodation* in the political and security areas Indo-Pak diplomacy must emphasise the need for systematic improvement of the relations by dispelling distrust *Mindsets* and *stereotypes* have been the greatest bane of the relations between the two countries The time has come to *make historical facts more accurate without being offensive to succeeding generations* This calls for a great degree of work and tact on both sides It is important to put across the historical events objectively and in a proper perspective Mistrust in India-Pakistan relations is much more a *creature of the mind* The goal should be to have less of parochialism and more of regionalism and globalism There can be no substitute for an informed public opinion Greater openmindedness and transparency of information based on *reciprocity* than in the past can also help develop confidence This can lay the basis for firm, long-lasting relations
- The main principles that should guide the relations include mutual respect for each other's independence, sovereignty and integrity, and non-interference in each other's internal affairs Even if both the countries are not able to make immediate breakthroughs, it is important that they restrain themselves from making provocative statements and/or taking provocative actions This indeed calls for a high degree of restraint and patience on both sides Symbolic gestures can also help in this context
- The primary and fundamental strategic goal of the two countries should be to focus on the process of nation-building, without ignoring the major challenges to their integrity, growth and development A *consensus* on South Asia's economic future should be the key Both India and Pakistan have to focus all their energies on building up their economic infrastructure, and thereby secure a rightful place for themselves in the changing global scenario We have to probably move from an arms race to a 'race in the field of trade and industry'
- Both India and Pakistan stand to gain by greater mutual interaction in the following areas
  - — trade and commerce
  - — mutual investment
  - — raw materials
  - — movement of skilled manpower
  - — science and technology
  - — information flow
- The objective should be to foster economic relationship in the region as a whole whereby regionally a *mutual*

dependence is developed The importance of regional economic cooperation should become self-evident in this context South Asia contains one-fifth of humanity More people are born in South Asia every year (27 million) than the total population of all the Scandinavian countries put together The World Bank has estimated that South Asia accounts for 40 per cent of the world's absolute poor surviving on less than a dollar a day The adult literacy rate of 48 per cent in South Asia pales in comparison to 98 per cent in East Asia Per capita investment in education and health is $14 in India and $10 in Pakistan in comparison to $150 in Malaysia and $160 in South Korea Intra-subcontinental trade has to be further enhanced The present state of the bilateral economic and trade ties between India and Pakistan is a far cry from the two countries' economic scale and potential Bilateral trade with India barely accounts for one per cent of Pakistan's exports and 0 3 per cent of its imports, but illegal trade is estimated to be between $ 80 million to $1 billion The ultimate success of foreign policy depends on the economic clout of both the countries The horizons of economic cooperation have to be widened by multiplying exchanges In short, both India and Pakistan *need to give a pronounced economic content to the conduct of foreign relations*

- Both India and Pakistan have to make efforts to *tackle common threats to peace, stability and development in the region* These areas include
  - — combating narcotics traffic which affects both the countries
  - — curbing terrorism in all its manifestations—the problem has been one of defining what does and does not constitute terrorism in the South Asian context The 'sponsorship' aspect of terrorism has been the most controversial in the context of India-Pakistan relations
  - — curbing fundamentalist and religious intolerance of all shades

Observations

INDIA and Pakistan have to realise that the path to healthier relations lies in improving ties in the non-contentious areas, while reducing the gravity of the more contentious issues An *entire gamut of issues* needs to figure on the agenda A positive shift would depend on an overall improvement of relations between New Delhi and Islamabad The Gujral doctrine, one hopes, is a reflection of a broad consensus within the foreign policy elite and the political class It is also a reflection of the political and economic imperative A momentum of economic development within the region can in the long run *produce a new concept of national security* emphasising the economic dimensions of security

Both India and Pakistan have to engage one another in a larger process of engagement within the region, and thereby remove obstacles to cooperation The leaders of India and Pakistan have to explore in all seriousness ways and means to eliminate the virus injected as a result of the partition strategy This can be done without disturbing the sovereign status of the two countries The effort should be to develop an overall relationship of mutual confidence, rooted in the need for a more pragmatic approach to bilateral and regional problems There are many compelling reasons for both the countries to warm up to each other Even small steps forward can have a big impact The challenge of the future is to engage in a broader dialogue amidst the intense differences

One cannot underestimate the fact that any assessment of the future of India-Pakistan relations must note the underlying factors which have influenced their relationship in the past, and may yet affect it in the future An ever expanding area and environment of *durable peace and cooperative security* is critical for the improvement of relations Both the countries have to make a more realistic appraisal of the realities—global and regional—and try to come to terms with each other India and Pakistan have to make an intense effort to free themselves from the foibles of the last fifty years, and remove the psychological barriers that have affected the process of normalisation All this sounds a tall order But there is no alternative to statesmanship The need of the hour is a *broader vision* for India-Pakistan relations ■

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PUBLISHERS

Rajwant Pal Singh
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4A/3, Dhillon Marg
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Editor, *Lok Dasta*
F-5/79, LIG Flats
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FIRST STEPS ON A LONG ROAD

Can Gujral and Nawaz Sharif Triumph over the Hardliners?

KARAN R SAWHNY

Although these are early days in the long process of normalising Indo-Pakistani relations, most South Asians have welcomed the new approach of Prime Ministers Nawaz Sharif and I K Gujral of working together to manage the conflicts and find solutions to the problems between the two countries In India, there is a sense that there will never be a better opportunity to stop cross-border terrorism and end the fifteen-year-long confrontation with Pakistan over Punjab and Kashmir which has already cost over 50,000 lives

The new Indian Prime Minister is one of the few Indian leaders who enjoy the goodwill of a large section of the Pakistani intelligentsia The opportunity this historic "fluke" offers must not be wasted Even more important now than the historic fluke is the pathbreaking courage shown by both the Prime Ministers, and particularly Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, in taking on the hardliners Gujral too, despite the fragility of his government, has gone more than half-way to respond to his counterpart so that, as Mian Nawan Sharif noted at the Male Summit, both countries could perhaps

> learn to live like civilised nations and put these uncivilised activities behind us

However, Indian public opinion is not ready to go further than India's diplomats have so far gone, unless support by Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence Agency (ISI) to cross-border terrorism is ended Winding down the hot war in Siachen and a real ceasefire across the Line of Control (LoC) as well as the cessation of support to violence in other Indian States will be evidence of Pakistani seriousness in improving relations

This seems as if it will be possible only if the role of the ISI in shaping Pakistan's relations with India and running the proxy war in Kashmir is ended Already the revelations by former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto of the ISI's manipulation of the country's domestic politics has caused the Pakistani Supreme Court to examine its political role The deposition of the former Army Chief, General Aslam Beg, the former ISI chief, General Durrani as well as the trial of former intelligence officials have revealed that the ISI was Pakistan's highest executive agency

The author is the Director of the International Centre for Peace Initiatives whose offices are located in both New Delhi and Mumbai

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THE Indian state too has much to introspect about Although militancy has abated in the Valley, it cannot yet be said that there are no militants left It is only when the remaining militants choose to practice non-violent politics and the "guest militants" leave, will ordinary Kashmiris feel that they and their children are free to create a peaceful new political culture based on grassroots activism rather than "leaders" supported by gunmen

According to a recently conducted study, about ten thousand children have been orphaned in Kashmir during the past seven years The devastating aspect of this tragedy is that the needs of all but a few hundreds have been ignored both by the State administration and the remaining militants Another study (on psychiatric disorders among children) identified "insecurity and absent-mindedness as widespread characteristics of present-day Kashmiri children" Doctors at the Government Psychiatric Hospital in Srinagar state that many children suffer very acute psychiatric problems resulting from post-traumatic stress disorders There has been also a sharp increase in the past few years in speech problems, particularly stuttering and stammering The impact of violence and the gun culture on the future of the children of Kashmir is most disturbing They have been socialised to violence and if this trend continues much longer, violence will become endemic to Kashmiri society

There are now more than 6000 women in the State who have been made widows because of the insurgency More children will be orphaned and more women widowed unless violence is stopped The right to life is the most precious of all rights

But, as the former British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, said in New Delhi last autumn,

> the very nature of the terrorists was that they refused to accept the legitimate claims of others

Virender Dayal, a member of India's National Human Rights Commission, has noted that

> the tragedy and irony of such a situation is exacerbated by the fact that terrorists, who themselves are implacable enemies of civil society and who hold the rights and values of such society—including the right to life—in contempt and to ransom, are quick to invoke the protection of such rights when under siege

Those who so carelessly play with others lives would do well to heed the Holy Quran (Sura 4 verse 29) *Wala Taqtolu anfosakum* (nor kill or destroy yourself) whose general meaning according to the authorised Saudi translation of the Holy Book is

> We must be careful of our own and other people's lives We must commit no violence Our violence to our brethren is particularly preposterous, seeing that Allah has showered His love and showered His mercies on us and all His creatures

India is not a state where Islam is in danger There can be no question, therefore, of launching a *Jihad* against it as the Kashmiri Jamait-e-Islami leader, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, and his Pakistani counterpart, Qazi Hussain Ahmed, have sometimes exhorted their followers to launch With all its faults the Indian state, more than most states with absolute Muslim majorities, has achieved the characteristics of a just Islamic state, that is, it is characterised by *Musawat* (equality), *Adal* (justice) and *Jamhuria* (democracy)

India's faults are those of degree, not of principle Pakistani leaders have long sought the withdrawal of Indian troops from the Valley If support for cross-border terrorism ceased, troop withdrawals would begin almost immediately For the truth is that guns can only be silenced by guns and killers by security personnel

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In the longer term, however, Indian leaders recognise that militancy and secessionism can only be fought politically and morally and not just by the forces of law and order A great country, moreover, cannot afford to be less than scrupulous about upholding the human rights of all its citizens The world community has also a duty to discourage the politics of confrontation, separatism and exclusivism which through aggressive militancy and terrorist methods has created situations where states are left with no option but to use force Force, because it is prone to both excess and error, often leads to violations of human rights and the jeopardisation of the lives of innocents Those in Pakistan who espouse the continuation of the strategy of terror in Kashmir bear a great responsibility for the deaths of innocents in both countries as well as for the poverty which deprives the mass of their people a dignified life and the fulfilment of basic needs

South Asia is again at a cross-roads If Pakistan is to be run by the Hameed Guls and Mast Guls (General Hameed Gul was the head of the ISI and announced last week that he would take his country's government to court over the "covert manner" in which Aimal Kansi—the alleged assassin of two CIA employees in Washington—was arrested and flown to the USA, Mast Gul was the leader of a gang of foreign mercenaries who burnt down the ancient Kashmiri shrine of Charar-e-Sharief in May 1995), then, perhaps, Indians must take serious note of the recent editorial in the Pakistani Army's journal, *Hilal*, among whose messages to its readers was that

> Islam bars the Muslims from extending a hand of friendship to the Hindus unless the latter change their thinking and nature

Fortunately is seems that the majority of the people of Pakistan have transcended the hatreds associated with the partition, fuelled regularly by wars and the fomenting of communal feeling, and now desire, like most Indians, friendship ■

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Collapse in Soviet Union : The Impact

RANDHIR SINGH

The following is the first part of the draft of the first chapter of a monograph—Crisis of Socialism Notes in Defence of a Commitment—*the author, one of the most outstanding Professors of Political Theory of Delhi University (now retired), is working on It covers the early impact of the collapse of the existing socialist states in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union It is being published in two parts* —Editor

Ours has been described as 'an age of revolution' The phrase did not merely signify the extraordinary range and depth of social awakening and mass mobilisation, massive popular upheavals, the dissolution of vast colonial empires and so much more in our times, it also carried a more specific reference to the dominant character of the historical changes in the twentieth century For even as the old world of global capitalism and bourgeois society in its liberal version collapsed in 1914 and for the next forty years, capitalism, impelled by its contradictions, stumbled from one crisis and catastrophe to another (the most prominent being the Great Depression and yet another World War), the most significant outcome was the emergence of a possible, socialist, alternative to capitalism With the overturning of the old order in Russia in 1917 and the establishment of communist power, one-sixth of the world broke away from the global capitalist social order

The inspiration and a certain support thus provided, the overturning continued and in due course, revolution spread in one country after another It spread to East Europe in the wake of the Red Amy during the last phase of the Second World War Next came the Chinese Revolution to be followed by a dozen or so, more or less successful, post-World War II revolutions—in Korea, Indo-China, Cuba, former African colonies of Portugal, the Horn of Africa, and later still in Southern Yemen, Nicaragua and elsewhere Approximately a third of the world's land surface and population went through revolutions involving profound socio-structural changes, constituting a whole new 'Second World', more or less detached from the global capitalist orbit This vast historical process, as already suggested, was positively inspired by Marxism Most of these revolutions were fought for and triumphed under the banner of Marxism, and the rest (with the notable exception of that entirely different kind of upheaval, the Iranian revolution) espoused Marxism (or Marxism-Leninism) soon after the conquest of power They proclaimed socialism and communism as their proximate and ultimate goals Even otherwise, since Marxism has always argued that the successor to capitalism will be socialism, it was almost natural that the post-revolutionary regimes chose to call themselves socialist (though, given the overall role and position of the Communist Parties, they were often spoken of as communist regimes) These regimes did indeed seek to build socialism, or given their low levels of development, move through a more or less prolonged transition, towards building a socialist society in their respective countries It appeared that Marx's vision of creating a new society, a more humane economic and social order that must replace capitalism, was on the way to realisation

The developments elsewhere in the capitalist world, its so-called First and Third Worlds, lent credibility to this hope The First World of industrially advanced capitalism certainly witnessed an unprecedented post-War boom but its exhaustion in the late 1960s and early 1970s was marked by a spectacular escalation of class struggle in several countries of the West—the Portuguese and Spanish revolutions of 1974-76 and the accompanying strike wave which brought workers and soldiers together into the streets under revolutionary banners, the French student rebellion and the general strike of May-June 1968, the upheaval unleashed by the Italian 'hot autumn' of 1969, the struggles which brought down the 1970-74 Heath Government in Britain, and so on While its working class did not share in this radicalisation, the United States had its share of popular struggles—the mass opposition to the Vietnam war, the upsurge for civil rights in the South and the series of insurrectionary developments in the northern ghettoes , Above and beyond these struggles in the West, was the overarching fact of the post-boom stagnation of the capitalist economy which showed no signs of abating and in its diverse consequences was contributing to the growing disenchantment with the system But far more significant were the happenings in the Third World, the periphery and semi-periphery of global capitalism Under the long-term impact of the October Revolution and signally facilitated by the presence and prestige of the Soviet Union, the post-Second World War period witnessed a prolonged, worldwide process of decolonisation, which shook the global capitalist system, yet again And winning their political freedom from imperialist domination, the newly-liberated countries of the Third World increasingly saw their future, often with Soviet inspiration and support, as some kind of non-capitalist or socialist development Even when they faltered or failed, given the presence of the Soviet Union, capitalism as a world system, continued to feel threatened and insecure

To any dispassionate observer of the world scene during this period, the concept of the 'general crisis of capitalism' regardless of its simplistic, even vulgar, Soviet interpretations, had a great deal to be said for it There was a growing anti-capitalist sentiment, a worldwide questioning of the capitalist social order on not only economic but even more on social, moral and cultural grounds The idea of socialism as a successor to capitalism had caught the imagination of the vast masses of the common people the world over If to the sceptic or the more cautious the kind of society that would dominate the future was still uncertain, it certainly appeared more uncertain for capitalism than socialism The ideologues of capitalism were openly apprehensive about it Socialists, including those critical of Soviet socialism and aware of its growing crisis, could with good reason argue and believe that, however painfully, socialism had already arrived as a historically ordained, that is necessary and possible, future for humankind Till this other day, 'an age of revolution' indeed seemed so apt a description of our times, a deservedly optimistic assessment of the twentieth century

And then, as if mocking all such historical optimism, we had another explosive upsurge, revolutions of another kind, which in a seeming reversal of the historical process of our times, overturned one communist regime after another in Eastern Europe and then in the Soviet Union itself The destruction of the infamous Berlin Wall signalled more a 'triumph of capitalism' than of democracy and the triumphant capitalism moved fast to repossess the territories lost to it through the socialist revolutions of the twentieth century The century itself, in this ironic turn of events, seemed to be ending a mere witness to Hegel's aphorism, 'history is a slaughter house' and in doing so putting a question-mark over socialism itself as the emancipatory project for our times The future seemed to have decided in favour of capitalism and there were no alternatives, not any longer Not only socialism, even radicalism in the traditional sense of the term was now passé Effective opposition, where permitted or possible, could at most take the form of mild, meliorative reforms

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TRIGGERED off by 'the Gorbachev phenomenon', but essentially born of and fuelled by the long-festering contradictions of the 'socialism' that was built, this new upsurge, described by some as 'the greatest transformation in the world economic and political scene since the end of World War II', swept through the entire 'socialist world', undermining, damaging and destroying the inherited economic, political and ideological structures in one country of 'actually existing socialism' after another, pushing these countries, once again, into a new, entirely uncharted territory, forcing the remaining communist or associated regimes to negotiate their own terms of adjustment and survival within the global capitalist system, and leaving the entire communist movement stranded in the midst of an unprecedented crisis

If the communist regimes in Eastern Europe, established at the end of the Second World War, seemingly stable even where imposed from above, simply disintegrated or were swept out of existence in a matter of days in, on the whole, remarkably peaceful popular revolts, leaving these countries willy-nilly busy finding a subservient place for themselves within the global capitalist social order, that in the Soviet Union, born of the October Revolution and in position for more than seventy years, collapsed, and the union came apart, in a matter of few years, to give way to lumpen capitalism and authoritarianism of a new kind These countries had all missed the moment of genuine socialism (which more than anything else has to be democratic) While sane socialist voices have not altogether disappeared and elements of socialist radicalism still survive, it will be long, may be very long, before the people of these erstwhile 'socialist' countries find their way back to socialism as it was originally meant to be Elsewhere in the 'socialist world', in China, North Korea, Vietnam or Cuba, all sites of more or less recent indigenous revolutionary movements with a certain social as well as nationalist basis of their own and owing little to the Red Army, the communist regimes, more exposed and vulnerable to the offensive of global capitalism than ever before, are desperately adjusting, often succumbing, to the new situation and thus opening up their economies to global capitalism, opting for the market and its incentives, reforming their economic structures, and taking other measures they hope will enable them to find their nichés in the global capitalist market The most important among the surviving communist regimes, China, had been already, for more than a decade, travelling the road to 'a market economy' Somewhat shaken initially by Tiananmen Square, it continues to survive, but in the name of building 'socialism with Chinese characteristics', persists with what has been described as 'market-Stalinism', its future open to the dangerous consequences of both 'market' and 'Stalinism', even if it somehow manages to evade them, unless the present course is reversed What is likely to be built in China will be anything but socialism as Marxism or the classical socialist tradition has understood it

Cuba alone stands out, so far, for its heroic effort at 'rectification' in order to defend the gains of its revolution and survive as a socialist country The states of so-called 'socialist orientation', their backwardness and vulnerability reinforced with the Soviet departure from the scene, are being pushed or sucked back into the world capitalist system as its traditional peripheries even as other countries of the region are threatened with the prospects of further peripheralisation within the same global economy And the communist movement, long tied up with the 'socialist world', even otherwise in retreat for quite some time, now further defeated, demoralised and disoriented, faces the deepest-ever crisis of its history, compelling it to undertake, on pain of extinction, a painful reappraisal of its theory and practice over these seventy long years

Momentous as its consequences have been for the countries and movements involved immediately or directly, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the socialist bloc is a continuing disaster for the vast mass of humanity in the Third World (Though, one may notice that of all the Third World regions, the radical movements in Latin America are perhaps least damaged by the Soviet collapse Apart from Cuba, the ex-Soviet Union did not invest heavily in this area and the movements here always had a somewhat greater indigenous strength and independence) The struggling peoples in country after country in Asia, Africa and Latin America had subsisted for decades on end on the socialist dream Now, not only has the dream disintegrated but the Soviet collapse leaves them confronting the most basic question of their post-colonial existence In a historical perspective, issues concerning socialism apart, the Soviet collapse is now also the case of a poor, economically backward country, breaking out of global capitalism, getting sucked back into it at the end of 70-odd years and thus raising anew the question what does a Third World country do in a situation of global domination of capitalism? Some 'nationalist' hiccups notwithstanding, the post-colonial bourgeoisie or ruling elites seem to have made their choice and, in a characteristic act of 'secession', gone over for joys of junior partnerships in a global capitalist economy But how about the common people? For them the choice now may well be socialism or peripheralisation within the global capitalist system In any case, with the Soviet collapse and the renewed offensive of global capitalism, the revolutionary struggles in the Third World, as they confront the above-mentioned question and the options available, face new and unprecedented special problems which, apart from matters of theory of political strategy and tactics, include vastly increased dangers of direct military intervention or prolonged 'low intensity warfare' Needless to add, the task of any pro-people 'national reconstruction' has now become vastly more difficult and tortuous than ever before

In the advanced industrial countries of the First World—and what happens here has its resonance worldwide—it is not just socialism which has collapsed with the collapse of the Soviet Union, but literally every tendency which emphasises the necessity of some form of intervention by a conscious agency for the improvement of the human condition Even as socialism is being banalised by ex-socialists into a species of welfare-capitalism, this is no longer acceptable to capitalism in its newly acquired post-Cold War aggressiveness As Right-wing convictions are spreading Leftward, they are displacing even milder forms of neo-Keynesianism, indeed any kind of social welfarism or planning The collapse of the Soviet Union and the allied communist movements, the parallel collapse of Third World radicalism in the backward zones of capitalism, combined with the collapse of traditional social democracy and associated labour movements in Western Europe, have given unbridled licence to the ideologues of the Right—everywhere market economy and liberal-democratic rhetoric seem to be defeating socialism and socialist ideas It needs to be underlined that all this—the *defeat* of communism or socialism as a political force in Europe (as indeed elsewhere) and the *triumph* of the most brutal kind of capitalism, the disorganisation of labour movements and the rise of Right-wing politics, including racism and fascism, across Europe are parts of a single process the Cold War did not just fade away, it was *won* by one side, *lost* by the other And most grievously damaged by this loss has been the cause of socialism, not only in the West but everywhere

Indeed, so comprehensively disastrous for socialism has the Soviet collapse been that the previous existence of the Soviet Union itself is being interpreted as only an episode in the history of contemporary capitalism The current triumphalism of the enemies expressed in the jocular invitations to consider the longest route from capitalism to capitalism and similar conundrums apart, we have the more substantial argument of an erstwhile friend, Eric Hobsbawm Pointing out that the institutions of liberal democracy virtually disappeared from all but a fringe of Europe in the two decades following 1922 as Fascism and its satellite authoritarian movements or regimes arose in one country after another, he has argued that but for the Red Army, the immense sacrifices of the USSR and its peoples, Western liberal capitalism would probably have succumbed to this threat and the contemporary Western world (outside of an isolated USA) would now consist of a set of variations on authoritarian and fascist regimes rather than a set of variations on liberal ones He concludes

> Perhaps history, in its irony, will decide that the most lasting movement of the October Revolution was to make the 'developed world' once again safe for 'bourgeois democracy'[1]

Hobsbawm however immediately adds 'But that is of course to assume that it will remain safe '

(It is certainly well to remember, as history of our times has shown again and again, that Right-wing authoritarianism or fascism is a tendency naturally inherent within contemporary capitalist societies While Stalinism indeed finally failed to build anything resembling socialism and whatever was built has come unglued out of its bureaucratic mismanagement, suppression of democracy, corruption and deformations of the planned economy, and degeneration of the ruling elite, capitalism yet remains impaled on its own contradictions, and therefore, in a situation of crisis or if threatened from below, open to a fascist or similar authoritarian option for its continued survival)

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THE collapse in Eastern Europe and even more in the Soviet Union was a surprise for foes and friends alike Once the surprise was over, the reactions to what had happened, on the Right as on the Left, have been along expected lines

The Right everywhere, most vocally in the West with inevitable echoes in the East, has been jubilant—the ancient spectre, 'spectre of communism' as Marx put it, which had haunted the capitalist world for almost a century and a half, has been finally laid Convinced, like many on the Left, that what existed in these countries *was* socialism, and one based on the teachings of Karl Marx, its failure is seen as a debacle of not only socialism—declared 'dead on arrival'—but of Marxism as well More than winning the Cold War it is the final victory in the global civil war started by the Bolsheviks in 1917, which at the same time effectively establishes the superiority of the market economy and liberal democratic form of social organisation The turn to market and free enterprise in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union as in the still surviving communist countries means not the crisis of a type of movement, regime or economy but its very end, certainly the beginning of the end, the ultimate elimination of any kind of socialist alternative to capitalism—henceforth it would be all plain liberal-free market sailing The authoritarian connotations imparted to 'socialism' in its Soviet or Stalinist version, having made it that much easier for the capitalist ideologues to obscure socialism's essential cannotations of anti-capitalism, they have gone to town associating capitalism with democracy and socialist equality with undemocracy Capitalism is not only immune to criticism on democratic grounds, it is itself a democratic social order And it speaks volumes for capitalism's ideological domination today that the very vocabulary of socialism has been appropriated for capitalist purposes—'radical reform' now is a change in the direction of privatisation and greater marketisation, and 'revolution' a synonym for a no-holds barred plunge into capitalism! It is thus that the Right of various hues, the world over, has been having a field day celebrating 'the triumph of capitalism'—'we have won', 'communism is finished, we can do what we like'—and even proclaiming, through its Fukuyamas, 'the end of history' itself It is not the first time, though, that servants or apologists of a ruling system have proclaimed that history did exist but has come to an end with the victory of their masters

In the midst of this Right-wing cacophony, we have also heard another voice that deserves to be noticed, that of Galbraith, who has, in his own haracteristic manner, more than once insisted that the Right is wrong' Galbraith has ridiculed the ight for its 'primitive ideology' which poses a stark hoice between capitalism and socialism Even as he akes note of the ugly, inhuman face of early apitalism, with its intolerable inequalities of income nd power, economic crises, human alienation and o on, he points out the significant achievements of vhat he calls 'early socialism' its abolition of feudal ppressions, building up of a modern industrial tate, providing of exemplary social security to the eople and so on The crux of Galbraith's argument s 'Capitalism in its original or pristine form could ot have survived But under pressure it did adapt ocialism in its original form and for its first tasks id succeed But it failed to adapt ' He contrasts the 'reframed and socially more responsible capitalist state' which has adapted to the imperatives of Trade Unions, Keynesianism, managerial revolution, social welfare, etc , with the 'inflexible and sterile socialist state' which has failed to adapt to the complexity and diversity of 'the new world of consumer society'—its centralised planning and command system have simply failed to cope with it Socialism too must adapt, he insists, and 'the only evident remedy is to move towards the market' He informs the Right that what Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, or for that matter China see as the alternative is not 'traditional capitalism' 'Were this the alternative,' he says, 'they would not want to change ' The alternative they see and seek, according to Galbraith, is 'the modern socially concerned state with a large mellowing and stabilising role by government'

Galbraith's is a persuasive argument, in its positi thrust it has been in fact a regular feature of the rich trajectory of his thought over the decades It is a tribute to his discerning and robust liberal commitment But as an expression of faith in a 'socially concerned state' in a market-based capitalist society, it is seriously flawed in its essential content and many details I shall revert to this issue briefly later in these notes Immediately I am only concerned to note this other voice, a voice of sanity as it were, coming from the otherwise euphoric centre of global capitalism

It needs to be noted, however, that the original Right-wing euphoria has much abated with the passage of years—the capitalist triumph remains incomplete, old problems are back and new anxieties have emerged Fukuyama himself, who had announced 'the end of history' in 1989 and claimed that the collapse in the East signalled the conclusive bankruptcy of all alternatives to liberal-democratic capitalism, has been distinctively less triumphalist and more cautious in his later articulations on the subject, and these have included an interesting, rather insightful, admission that liberal democracies, in their ultimate success, *sans* historically relevant conflicts or challenge, might well find their citizens regress into an affluent animality!

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ON the Left, the reaction, understandably more varied and complex, has been again along predictable lines

The collapse of 'a system which nurtured and sustained the hopes of generation after generation of socialists throughout the world (is) a dreadful event from the point of view of socialists everywhere'—this is how Ralph Miliband put it at the very outset It has been seen as a tragedy and a defeat not only for the 'faithfuls' among them but for the critics too, who had criticised in the hope of a change for the better and had never even remotely visualised this change for the worst It is a defeat not because the regions in Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union were models of the society the socialists meant, but because they and the political movements influenced by them were the focus of the first worldwide challenge to capitalist power, capitalist exploitation, capitalist morality and culture And however flawed or deformed their 'actually existing socialism', it was yet the symbol of a possibility, the possibility of escape from that essentially predatory system, capitalism Socialists who had no illusions about the Soviet Union, nevertheless, viewed it as a strategically significant entity As G A Cohen has underlined it

> The Soviet Union needed to be there as a defective model so that, with one eye on it, we could construct a better one It created a non-capitalist space in which to think about socialism

There were others, socialists again, who had an entirely negative assessment of the Soviet Union for the future of socialism But even they have not escaped the demoralising impact of its collapse, an impact well-expressed by Ronald Aronson

> No longer believing that a reformed communism might fulfil Marxism's promise, I had become sure that its very existence blocked political energies in the West as well as the East, and eagerly anticipated that the end of this 'sustaining menace' would release enormous emancipatory forces everywhere But the opposite happened the end of Communism instead became part of a stunning defeat of those social forces, ideas, structures projects and even values, which for two centuries have been identified with the Left
>
> The very immobility and ponderousness of the Soviet Union counted for something positive in our collective psychic

> space, allowing us to keep hope alive that a successful socialism might still emerge It provided a backdrop against which such alternatives could be thought about and discussed, including, for some, the hope that some other versions of Marxism remained viable

Thus, the pain and anguish, the dejection, over the collapse of the Soviet Union has more than involved its erstwhile critics on the Left too Many indeed would share the early response of Cohen as the Soviet tragedy unfolded itself—a response distinguished for its exceptional sensitivity While, like so many others, Cohen too had a petty adverse assessment of the Soviet Union's claim to be a socialist society, he deplored the disappearance of both 'the Sovietness and the unionhood' of the Soviet Union, was saddened by 'what I perceive to be the impending final abandonment of the Bolshevik experiment' and regretted the impact of the termination of the experiment on how socialism is assessed But, adding that his dejection goes beyond such matters of political calculation, this is how Cohen put it on the eve of the final break-up of the Soviet Union

> The answer is that, although I have long since sustained little hope that things in the Soviet Union might get substantially better, in a socialist sense, there is, in certain domains, and people are prone to overlook this, a vast difference between nourishing little hope and giving up all hope The small hope that I kept was, as it were an immense thing, since so much was at stake And now that residual hope has to be foresworn So a feeling of loss is not surprising
>
> And there is also another and perhaps less rational motive here It is true that I was heavily critical of the Soviet Union, but the angry little boy who pummels his father's chest will not be glad if the old man collapses As long as the Soviet Union seemed safe, it felt safe for one to be anti-Soviet Now that it begins, disobligingly, to crumble, I feel impotently protective towards it

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THE loss of a viable alternative to capitalism, however inadequate it might have been, has induced a widespread pessimism where any kind of programmatic commitment to socialism, indeed the very idea or hope of socialism has come to be abandoned The Soviet collapse has resulted in a general retreat from socialism on the Left It is now 'an old and failed social order', 'an impossible dream', in any case of no relevance in the practical politics of today or tomorrow A good, almost typical, example here is the much-noticed shift in the thinking of the eminent Marxist historian, Eric Hobsbawm, a long-time socialist and a former member of the now defunct Communist Party of Great Britain Hobsbawm's definitive phrase, 'the short twentieth century, 1914-1991', underlines the historically significant presenc and demise of the Soviet experiment in socialism and in explaining its failures he has been equall explicit about its achievements (Incidentally, h suggests that among other factors, the post-Wa 'Golden Age' of capitalism would have beer impossible without the emergence of mixec economies in the advanced capitalist countries anc that this development was partially due to th Soviet example of state intervention in the economy Flashes of old understanding and commitment stil shine through Hobsbawm's recent writing when he points out that 'the collapse of one part of the world revealed the malaise of the rest' and urges us 'tc consider, once again, the built-in defects o capitalism', or speaks of 'the world crisis' which is 'not only general in an economic sense, but equally general in politics' and is accompanied by the social and moral crises, or insists that 'maximum growth does not mean maximum well-being' and agrees that 'unlocking market forces as a solution to mass unemployment' is today 'a monument to human folly' or hoping for 'a better, more just and more viable world' warns of 'the price' of a failure here, 'that is to say, the alternative to a changed society is darkness', etc , etc This, it has been suggested, Hobsbawm surely seems unwilling to entirely chuck the future of socialism and hop a ride on the new world order But then he is equally unwilling to argue *for* socialism, not any longer When he urges 'Labour intellectuals' 'to talk about the publicly unspeakable', it is not socialism he is thinking of Instead his concern now is with such things as making 'the case for redistributive taxation to achieve public purpose and relieve the growth of poverty'—and this when Hobsbawm himself recognises how, under the present conditions, 'the policies that worked so well in the golden mid-century decades of cohabitation between regulated capitalism and social democracy broke down and cannot be restored' If there is a certain hopefulness, however vague or vacuous, about his proposition, 'the only completely certain generalisation about history is that, so long as there is a human race, it wil go on', the limits to this hopefulness are severely set by Hobsbawm's more precise, programmatic statement

> Except for a few paleolithic sectarian survivals, everyone agrees that the future of the European Left lies in Centre-Left governments' finding a viable mix of private and public interests

Hobsbawm has thus moved fast and far, Rightwards, to finally settle for social democracy which is left with hardly any credibility these days It is indeed a trivialisation of history to thus circumscribe the contemporary options of the European Left (and by implication of the Left elsewhere) It is equally a refusal to see, odd theoretical nods in that direction notwithstanding the stark reality of contemporary capitalism, its contradictions all the sharper in its hour of triumph and threatening an ecological disaster which will soon make impossible any kind of going on for the human race on our planet

Admitting to being 'paleolithics', but all the same in 'very good company'—'outside of Europe there are literally millions of paleolithics by Eric's definition, and even in Europe there are quite a few of them'—Sweezy and Magdoff have observed

> Here we must pose a question that Hobsbawm's analysis clearly implies but that he seems not to recognise and certainly fails to make explicit What happened to the conditions that made possible the golden decades of cohabitation between regulated capitalism and social democracy? Why did they break down? Are they likely to return in the foreseeable future? If not, what chance is there that the European Left, or any other Left for that matter, will ever again be able to enjoy the luxury of cohabitation with capitalism, whether regulated or unregulated? This is the question that all non-paleolithics must sooner or later face up to

One may well pose another question too What relevance does Hobsbawm's prescription have to the situation of overwhelming majority of humankind living outside of Europe, the millions upon millions of impoverished and hungry people in the backward, worst-exploited zones of the capitalist world, in Asia, Africa and Latin America, now facing the prospect of only farther peripheralisation under the recharged domination of global capitalism?

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THE Soviet Union apart, the idea of socialism had, historically, found its most significant organised expression in social democracy in the West and the worldwide communist movement In decline for quite sometime now, both have been, directly or otherwise, hit hard by the Soviet collapse Long involved in softening the contradictions of capitalist society and ensuring its smooth functioning, the submission of social democracy to capitalism is now virtually complete And the collapse in the Soviet Union has finally exposed the long-festering bankruptcy of 'historical communism' as it has been called The degeneration and decline of these two movements is an important factor in the contemporary retreat from socialism on the Left, making the search for any new society a truly unfashionable affair in the West and even more difficult and problematic a task elsewhere

Social democracy is a concept with a very shifting meaning Having lost not only its original connotation of the times of Marx and Engels, but also the one it acquired after the Bolshevik Revolution, it is virtually a misnomer now Even between the two World Wars, that is, after the break-up of the Second International, the social democrats were committed at least in theory, to the transfer of power to the working people and the social ownership of the means of production, in other words, to the abolition of the capitalist system They still felt compelled to proclaim their faith in a different social order Only as against Lenin and Communists or revolutionary socialists, they claimed that this could be achieved gradually and peacefully, democratically as they put it, within existing institutions

But things changed rapidly and totally after the Second World War After a more or less brief period of ritualistic lip-service, all pretense to socialism was dropped The resilience and vitality of post-War capitalism (thirty years of unprecedented expansion which enabled it to make concessions to the working class as also prosecute the Cold War effectively, both materially and ideologically) and the disappointments, dissensions and defeats on the Left (the failure of Soviet socialism to reform itself, communist-socialist divide, dissipation of the hopes generated by the spasm of 1968, etc) were among the important factors that contributed to the ever more pronounced integration of social democratic parties and governments into the fabric of capitalist society With the post-War boom giving way to economic stagnation in the early seventies, the foundations of the so-called 'historical compromise' that had sustained mutual concessions between capital and labour, simply crumbled The capitalist class would no longer countenance any such compromise Instead it chose to dismantle the welfare state While the social democratic Left, continuing to move towards the Centre, was opting for yet more class collaboration, the radicalised Right opted for open class war backing its electoral and other victories with a new ideological offensive on behalf of capitalism affirmation of the virtues of the market, of the superiority of 'free enterprise' and competition, glorification of socially indifferent individualism as against the socialised individualism to which socialism is committed With the Soviet collapse, the capitalist offensive, economic, political and ideological, has become all the more open and aggressive, even brutal, leaving little scope for social democratic reformism For a long time, the social democrats had become the reforming managers of capitalist society, but now such 'reformism' has become not merely problematic but near impossible Capitalism, simultaneously triumphant in the Cold War and stagnant economically, will not allow and cannot afford any 'reformist social welfare' Social democracy, even as we had come to know it in recent times, has finally collapsed Only the working class in the West has yet to see this collapse not as a further demise of socialism but the impossibility of changing capitalism progressively by reformism instead of fundamentally by revolutionary class struggle

The other significant organised expression of the idea of socialism has been the worldwide communist movement, born proximately or ultimately of the October Revolution It has tremendous achievements to its credit, including several successful revolutions (in China and elsewhere) and an extraordinarily rich worldwide legacy of popular struggles, of heroism and sacrifice But it too had tended to decay and decline over the recent decades The factors that contributed to the reformist degeneration of social democracy were at work here too Additionally, dogmatism in matters of theory—via mostly the 'official Marxism' emanating from Moscow—and a pseudo-internationalism—in effect a voluntary subservience that subordinated communist politics to the requirements of the foreign policy or *raison d'etat* of the Soviet Union—had a serious disabling consequence for the Communist Parties, disorienting them in their national politics and undermining their capacity for coping with the complex and constantly changing realities of the world around them, for independent thought and action as parties of revolutionary Marxism that they claimed to be

Despite occasional doubts or reservations and the somewhat more persistent criticism of 'revisionism' of the post-Stalin era, the Soviet Union (alongwith the 'socialist camp') was a reference point for most leaders and cadres of the Communist Parties Such developments as Khrushchev's report at the Twentieth Party Congress, or the Soviet-Chinese split, were cause enough for anxiety, but the dynamics of Gorbachev's *glasnost*—which revealed as never before the *other* face of the Soviet Union, disfigured by illegality and injustices, crimes and oppressions, purges, executions and gulags, and degeneration of Communist leadership—dealt a heavy blow to the most sacrosanct underpinnings of this reference point or identity, leaving the Communist leaders and cadres bewildered and demoralised And when alongwith the *glasnost* came *perestroika* which ended up in the collapse and disintegration of the Soviet Union and the 'socialist camp', it was an absolute disaster for the communist movement Decades of reformist practice had already taken its toll Now in one country after another, including East Europe, they have either gone defunct or dropping even the pretence of being Communists, formally lapsed into social democracy, for whatever it is now worth The communist movement as we had known it over these 70-odd years has more or less collapsed

Of course, there still remain on the Left Communist Parties which have refused to surrender their name or identity, 'the old faithfuls' which always unquestioningly accepted the claims of the collapsed regimes to be truly socialist—occasional reservations about a Khrushchev or a Brezhnev only made them all the more nostalgic about the Stalin era (a nostaliga shared by most ultra-Left Communist formations who easily combine it with an equally dogmatic attachment to Mao and Maoism) They have indeed been having a really anxious time Having travelled, full of hope, anxiety and finally fear, the entire distance with Gorbachev, his promise of 'socialist renewal', his *perestroika* and *glasnost*, often believing the one and doubting the other, they have been simply overtaken by the events Thus overwhelmed, there is incomprehension and an acute sense of betrayal But given their ideological conditioning and the inherited modes of inquiry, they have found it difficult to produce a viable *Marxist* understanding of this final collapse and its horrendous immediate aftermath—break-up of the states, national chauvinisms and xenophobia, ethnic cauldrons and civil wars, fundamentalist reactions and revivals, anti-Semitism and atavistic regressions of all kinds—which understanding is necessary for rectification of these old Communist Parties, if they would survive as radical political formations and not end up as mere orphans of 'actually existing socialism' But instead of any such rectification, so far they have been content to make, at best, mild critical nods in the direction of Stalin, complain of 'distortions and misapplications' in the practice of socialism, blame it all mostly on Gorbachev and US imperialism Pressed for more, there is an eclectic listing of 'evils'—'violation of Leninist norms of inner-party democracy', 'growth of bureaucratism', 'ideological erosion', 'the corrupting influence of opportunists' and so on, but no *explanation* even as they continue to pay their cliché-ridden obeisance to the doctrine of Karl Marx (to which, incidentally, historical materialist explanation is central) or proclaim, at regular intervals, the 'invincibility' of 'the science of Marxism-Leninism', and having done that carry on with their reformist political practices, aligning their politics to 'realistic policies', jumping from doctrine to 'reality' without the slightest moral or epistemological scruples Needless to say, this way, there is, if any, certainly no socialist future for them

That socialist aspirations have lost their traditional moorings in the social democratic and Communist Parties which were historically the two main institutional embodiments of the socialist project in our times, that the former having long lost any interest in transcending capitalist social relations and marginalised those within who sought to re-establish social ideals and practices, have finally definitely divested themselves of even the pretence of any commitment whatsoever to socialism, and the latter, under the impact of the current crisis, rather than move in the direction of revival of socialism, have in most cases, both in the East and the West, dramatically or otherwise, collapsed, often all the way, even formally, into contemporary social democracy, is a major factor behind the retreat from socialism we are witnessing all around us

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So far as an effective struggle against capitalism or any socialist project is concerned, contemporary social democratic and communist movements had gone sclerotic long before the Soviet collapse or the current crisis of socialism (It is significant that almost all the popular movements of the last three decades, all of them potential allies in the struggle for socialism—youth rebellion of 1968, women's liberation, the ecological movement, the struggle for democratic rights and so on—have grown outside these traditional parties of the Left, often in the face of their suspicion and hostility) But now a more or less explicit disavowal of socialism and its values is accompanied by an open theoretical surrender to capitalism and its ideology It is not merely that in throwing away the dirty bath water of 'actually existing socialism', its anti-democratic, repressive political regime and system of bureaucratically centralised planning, they have thrown out the baby too, namely, the idea of moving beyond capitalism towards a free, democratic, socially just society built on the basis of a genuine social ownership of the means of production and democratically planned economy In their so-called 'reconciliation with reality' —'there is no alternative'—even as they are abandoning the time-honoured socialist values, that generations of Socialists and Communists have fought and suffered for—human freedom, social democracy, economic justice, social equality, fraternity and solidarity, they are opting for not only the values of bourgeois democracy—which whatever the limitations is most welcome—but also the much clichéd values of predatory capitalism—'market economy', 'free competition', 'free enterprise', monetarism, culture of the market, etc etc

The retreat from socialism and the politics of struggle for it, accommodation to the capitalist system and an overall loss of character as fighting formations of the working people they were supposed to be, has naturally led to an organisational crises in these parties of the Left, all the more serious in those with more radical or revolutionary pretensions—a crisis of identity leading to dramatic disintegration in some cases and stagnation and slow decline in most others An erosion of popular support has been accompanied by loss in involved or active membership While many have stayed on for sheer habit and inertia, or old times sake, or content, under slogans of 'realism' or 'practical politics', to seek minor amelioration of oppressions within the existing social order, others have moved away to more viable bourgeois platforms for their reformist politics or for the spoils of new partnerships Some, grown tired and indifferent, all passions spent, have dropped out adding to the growing numbers of cynical ex-Socialists or ex-Communists And there are yet others who have left in anguish because history did them dirty, leaving a residue of despair and confusion even among many who struggled for decades with courage, imagination and sacrifice for a better world that is not yet

Taking a longer view of the development of the organised socialist movement of modern times, a thought is inescapable Emerging in the nineteenth century Europe, largely Marxist in inspiration and committed to socialism as Marx saw it, Social Democracy simultaneously grew and degenerated (with the exception of the Bolsheviks in Russia) along the reformist path to finally collapse with the War in 1914, when abandoning its declared socialist principles and commitments, its different parties lined up behind their respective national bourgeoisie to become accomplices in their imperialist adventure It needs to be noticed that not one of these parties of the Second International even recovered its socialist commitment They continued to degenerate along the reformist path to reach the present denouement, when even the best of them can hope or dream of nothing better than capitalism with a human face, a face that capitalism itself is now refusing to put on The failure of Social Democracy was only underlined by the success of the October Revolution, following which came another, now worldwide, wave of parties of socialism, the Communist Parties, wholly Marxist in inspiration and committed to a revolutionary struggle for socialism They struggled and grew, won revolutions and lost them However, their chequered history has not saved them too from sliding down the reformist path to reach, with the collapse in the Soviet Union, more or less the same denouement as Social Democracy It only remains to be added that there is no historical guarantee that any of the parties of the Third International will ever recover its lost commitment to socialism

But then the causes which gave rise to these two waves on behalf of socialism not only remain, they are in many ways more imperative now than ever in the past Only the historically blind or shortsighted will rule out a third wave of socialism And it may come sooner than most people think The alternatives continue to be, as Marx put it long ago 'socialism or barbarism'

(To be continued)

SPORTS

No Sport This, Mike!

DEEPAK PAL

Hand-cuffed, on his way to the prison, the thief wanted to speak to his aunt for a moment His request granted, he signalled the aunt to come closer to him so that he could speak into her ears The woman, rather his aunt, did so and soon gave a loud shriek She was bitten in the ear "What is this?" she wailed "If you had cautioned me the first day I pinched a pencil, and told you about it," the man said, "I wouldn't have seen this day"

This is a story I read when I was a boy Well, the thief had his reasons But one fails to understand or just even guess, what reason Mike Tyson, one of the greatest pugilists of recent times, might have had when he bit Evander Holyfield in his ear, not once but twice, during their title bout in Las Vagas No other incident in the world of sports created such widespread furore and evoked condemnation as this one did It happened on the last Saturday of June A "Black Saturday" in the history of sports, more so, in the history of boxing where "hitting below the belt" is considered a taboo Biting the ear tantamounts to hitting below the belt in sports parlance

That evening a sell-out crowd of 16,331 at the MGM Grand was in an uproar from the time the fighters entered the ring Tyson came out cautiously and rocked Holyfield with the first punch, a right to the head, prompting Holyfield with a couple of punches on Tyson's head In the second round, Tyson was cut at the right eye by what Mills Lane, the match referee, ruled was an accidental head butt Then came the weird and wild third round Early in the round, Tyson landed several short punches to the head that moved Holyfield back With about 40 seconds left and Tyson controlling the round, Holyfield suddenly jumped up and down in anger and walked away, blood oozing from his right ear Time was called Two points were deducted from Tyson's score "I told Tyson after the first bite—one more like that and you're gone," Mills Lane said later

The "battle royal" resumed after a delay of four minutes, and when it did, Tyson bit Holyfield on the left ear After the round ended, the match referee, disqualified Tyson, not because of the bleeding but because of the foul—rather a double foul—perpetrated on Evander Holyfield, who thereupon retained the WBA title and earned at least $35 million Tyson's $30-million purse was withheld pending a hearing before the Nevada Athletic Commission

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It was really a sorry state of affairs A chorus of condemnation rained down on the man—who a decade ago had become the youngest world heavyweight champion at the age of 20—and demanded a life-time ban for committing a crime which has no parallel in the history of sports "I think he's just written his final passage in boxing," remarked the venerable boxing historian Bert Sugar. "That's it, good-bye Mike," he said. "Mike Tyson must never fight again," wrote Joe Hawk, boxing columnist of the *Las Vegas Review Journal*. "Never under any conditions, in any setting, against any opponent," emphasised Joe Hawk. The veteran *Los Angeles Times* columnist Jim Murray did not mince words about Tyson's display in the ring. He too urged that Tyson be banned. "He should not be allowed to fight again unless it is against a hungry grizzly. He took pugilism back to the cave." Such worldwide condemnation of the incident which was termed as "The bite of the century", "Bite to the finish", "Chump chomps champ", by different overseas papers, made Tyson apologise for biting Holyfield, asking for forgiveness and pleading not to ban him from boxing for the rest of his life. "I cannot tell you why I acted like I did. I can only say I thought I might lose, because of a severe cut above my eye and I just snapped," Tyson said. He apologised to everyone, from the State Boxing Commission to the judge who sentenced him on his rape conviction, and finally to Holyfield. He appealed to the Nevada Athletic Commission. "It will never happen again. I only ask that you forgive me as you have forgiven other athletes in this sport." Tyson was ready to accept any penalty imposed by state boxing authorities and would not fight efforts by suspend and fine him for biting Holyfield.

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The heavyweight champion Evander Holyfield was in a forgiving mood. "What has been done, has been done. I thank the Lord that I didn't have permanent injury. The little piece of ear that's gone is not really important and you just hope that he's learnt from what he's done." He said further that he would not bring charges against Tyson. Accepting the apology Tyson offered, Holyfield said only time would tell if it was sincere. "I think the boxing needed an eye-opener for the commissioner and the referees and the judges to see how we can better the game of boxing for the up and coming fighters," Holyfield said. "A life-time ban would not be too much," he felt. "But the commission would have to make that decision." Luther Mack, a member of the commission, said. "We never have done that before. The fact Holyfield said he would forgive him and has no hatred in his heart, that is important."

And as the world awaited the outcome, the five-man Nevada State Athletic Commission in its historic judgement revoked Mike Tyson's boxing licence and imposed a fine of $3 million. He was also ordered to pay legal costs. He can apply for reinstatement of his licence in one year. If his first request for reinstatement after one year was turned down, he could re-apply again every year. "It could be a life-time ban, it depends on what the outcome is next year and the year after," said commission member Lorenzo Fertitta.

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It is incredible that people still see Tyson as a hero. He is undeserving of any loyalty. He will learn little from his exile and the world willing to pay millions to see him again can expect him to be even more hostile. As Bill Plaschke wrote in *Los Angeles Times* after the now infamous incident, "He didn't lose his mind, that is his mind. This is just the first time anyone has seen it in the ring." Before the verdict was pronounced Holyfield commented that Tyson must gain control of his life, regardless of the decision. "Attitude is what causes us to fail," Holyfield said. "If you can control your emotions you can control a lot of things. That's what I'd tell Tyson." His wife Janice said. "Tyson needs to get help, to be in control of his anger." Earlier Holyfield said. "I have some valuable information I know can help him. He has to be more responsible in his actions and be the man he is supposed to be. You will never get the help if you don't ever point to yourself and say, 'I need to make a change.'"

Words fail one to appreciate the magnanimity of the world heavyweight champion! Even after that bizzare incident of "ear-biting" he was ready to forget and forgive everything and came out with a bit of advice for Mike Tyson. "Why did you become the heavyweight champion of the world? Because your desire was to become the heavyweigh champion of the world. You need the same desire to become a better person. Until you get that desire your life is going to go down. We have to work jus as hard to be good people as we do in ou endeavours."

Do you hear Mike Tyson? Unlike your ring counterpart you have both your ears intact. Would you like to lend those to get to the bottom of wha the magnanimous Evander Holyfield has to tell you and just hang your head in shame, despair frustration, and accept the age-old adage. Play th game in the spirit of the game? Do you realise wha you have done is no sport? Do you? Mike? ■

Freedom implies not only emancipation from political bondage but also equal distribution of wealth, abolition of caste barriers and social inequities, and destruction of communalism and religious intolerance.

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose

Sah Brothers

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Invade Bihar with Vihar

SHARAD PATIL

Prof Amitabh Mattoo of the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) had captioned his write-up as "Before Laloo's Bihar Invades Delhi" in *The Indian Express* ('April 5, 1997) It was his reaction against Chandrashekhar Prasad's murder in Bihar Chandrashekhar, a brilliant Naxalite student leader of the JNU, was not murdered by the goons of the Congress or the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), but by the workers of Laloo Prasad's ruling Janata Dal (JD) which then headed the UF Government in Delhi (Subsequently Laloo has floated his new outfit, the Rashtriya Janata Dal or RJD, but that is a different story)

The Proletarian Divide

CHANDRASHEKHAR's party is leading armed struggles of the *class* of rural proletarians and semi-proletarians in Bihar, while Laloo Prasad Yadav's JD is heading the parliamentary upheaval of the *castes* of the social proletariat and the OBCs Dr B R Ambedkar had warned the Communists and Socialists of the split in the Indian proletariat on social lines in 1936 itself The split occurred not then, but in the post-independence period B T Ranadive had warned of the doom of the Left trade union movement if no attention was paid to the social grievances of the IVth class workers comprising mostly Dalits and Adivasis in his Presidential address to the CITU conference a year before his death He should have, however, realised that the Communist cadres do not heed to sentimental appeals unless those are backed by the programmatic commandment of caste abolition

Even after the split it was thought that the two sections of Indian workers would operate parallely It was the first stage in the unity of opposites With the advent of the Mandal era the caste struggle for power was added to the class struggle for power Nonetheless, the anti-class and anti-caste parties remained in coexistence in or with the UF But, the Common Minimum Programme (CMP) which was to the liking of even the BJP, the enemy No 1 of the LF, tore down the remaining anti-class facade of the LF, while the anti-caste parties turned casteist The internal and external non-antagonistic contradictions of the UF Government turned into antagonistic ones The coexistence of the economic and social proletariats and their respective allies had become inimical Chandrashekhar is a victim of this queer antagonistic contradiction and countless others will follow

Allies into Enemies

AMBEDKAR had visualised the OBCs as an ally of the social proletariat, the others being the Adivasi and criminal tribes The caste strategy reverberated triumphantly in the initial Mandal era and its highest culmination was the UP State Government formed by the Lohiaite Mulayam Singh Yadav's SP and the Ambedkarite Kanshi Ram's BSP Both of them, the former leading the OBC peasantry and the latter the social proletariat, were looked upon as the messiahs of the caste strategy on the national scale eclipsing the class strategy With the fall of the SP-BSP Government, supported by the tailist CPI and CPI-M, the two allies turned into enemies Mayawati charged that Mulayam was eating away her MLAs, and though it was nonetheless true as regards the CPs, they stuck to their non-dialectical United Front policy The political enmity was bound to pass into economic and social ones

Ominous trends were looming on the political horizon from not-so-unexpected quarters The LF is no more the unchallenged leader of even the economic or *savarna* proletariat The Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) of the BJP is numerically the biggest all-India trade union organisation The last major anti-feudal struggles of the peasantry fought by the undivided CPI, spilling over the post-independence period, were the Tebhaga in Bengal and Telengana in Andhra Pradesh With the liquidation of statutory landlordism by the Congress State Governments and similar enactments by the LDF and LF State Governments in Kerala and West Bengal respectively, no such major anti-feudal struggles have taken place With the fall in the prices of the agricultural products in the seventies, major struggles of the peasantry for remunerative prices of agricultural products started being waged by independent peasant organisations in Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Maharashtra, UP and Karnataka, from which the Kisan Sabhas of the CPs remained aloof on the plea that they were of the kulaks in spite of the fact that the CPs were upholding the demand as one of the major demands of the peasantry and the class of anti-feudal peasantry included the rich peasants In theoretical justification of this anti-struggle stand, P Sundarayya, the then General Secretary of the CPI-M, had coined the hybrid feudo-capitalist term of *capitalist landlord*!

The *zamindar* of the pre-British feudal period was never the owner of his *rayats'* lands, he being the chief of co-caste *mirasdar* peasants Such *zamindars* were made owners of their *rayats'* lands by the British Government in the provinces that came to be called *zamindari* This is how the European class relation of lord and vassal was super-imposed by the British Government Even in the provinces where *rayatwari* continued, the British sovereign was made the owner of the *rayats'* lands which was never the case in Indian feudalism In pre-British India, as I have shown in my Vol II entitled *Jativyavasthak Samanti Sevakatva* (English version *Caste Feudal Servitude*), one dominant military peasant caste could be displaced by another non-dominant peasant caste, but caste as such remained homogeneous A *zamindar* was *born* in the leading family of the local dominant *mirasdar* peasant caste and as such he owed his office not to the king but to his caste Class-like differentiation in advanced castes started during the rule of the imperial British capital and spread to all castes in the post-independence period Though this raised the possibility of abolition of the caste system for the first time, it has not led and cannot lead to the automatic disintegration of the caste system

It is these peasant castes that are dominant locally or at the State level—for example, Maratha, Mali, Jat, Lingayat, Vokkaliga, etc ,—that lead the peasant struggles conducted by these independent peasant organisations Though these struggles are for economic demands, Sharad Joshi considers caste to be a reality and not class Nevertheless, though Phuley is one of his preceptors, he upholds Phuley's economic teaching and not his teaching of caste annihilation For Joshi socialism, or any form of equality, is a lollipop! Hence, in this period of anti-caste and anti-class parties turning casteist, the peasant followers of these independent farmers' organisations, in spite of their ongoing militant struggles, are bound to become more and more anti-SC-ST

Anti-Classism into Casteism

THE point that anti-class parties have turned casteist needs elaboration The fall of the Deve Gowda Government does not mean that the parties supporting the CMP will change their economic policy of liberalisation, rather privatisation of the economy This economic policy will do away with reservation It is well known that the LF Government of West Bengal continues to be an active opponent of reservation based on caste Though it was compelled by the Constitution to continue reservation to the SCs and STs, it has refused reservation to its OBCs Reservation in education and services was the greatest gain won by the non-Brahman and Dalit movements of South India Undoing it under the pretext of implementing the liberalisation of the economy has already turned the anti-class parties into casteist ones

The amendment to the Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction on Transfer of Lands and Restoration of Alienated Lands) Act, 1975 passed by the Kerala Assembly unanimously on July 23, 1996 and awaiting Presidential clearance, has turned the CPs into anti-Adivasi parties The BJP has taken full advantage of it *The Indian Express* (April 7, 1997) reports that the BJP's front organisation Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) was able to mobilise 15,000 Adivasi men and women from the three blocks of Peravoor, Iritty and Aralam of Kannur district for its rally at Iritty to hear a little-known VHP leader, Madhu Deolkar The report goes on to say that the BJP is making deep inroads in Kannur, Waynad and Palakkad districts known to be the heartland of the communist movement And Palakkad is the place from where the Naxalites had kidnapped its Collector I was told that the various Naxalite factions are quarrelling on the basic issue as to who should lead the aggrieved Adivasis!

The caption of a news item in *The Indian Express*, dated March 9, 1997, runs "Communist Citadel in Kerala starts crumbling under Casteist Ostracism" Kolakkad, which held the first farmers' conference in the thirties, has boycotted the anti-caste Kerala Yukthivadi Sangham (KYS) and its supporters Denouncing these 'crazy deeds of barbarians', the notice distributed by the KYS goes on to say "We, in Kodakkad, fought for freedom, and employment not on casteist lines Yet caste that had to be buried along with feudalism, is wreaking havoc in our lives."

I visited Kerala twice in 1993-94 to address three-day study camps of workers of a Christian fishermen's organisation and Dalit Christians In my first visit I was taken to meet K R Gowri on December 12, 1993 She was under suspension by the State CPI-M Committee. Though she hails from Narayan Guru's Ezhava caste, she denied the very existence of the caste crisis in Indian society and politics (See my article 'Gowriamma's Janadhipatyam Samrakshan Samithi in Kerala', *Clarity*, October 1-8, 1995) It is this denial of the reality of caste in India that has led the CPs to become casteists!

Revolutionary Crisis

THE unilinear class methodology of the Indian CPs inhibits them from visualising any revolutionary crisis, except that of class The philosophical root of this dogma was exposed when M Basavapunaiah's paper "On Contradiction, Antagonistic and Non-Antagonistic" appeared in the Marx Death Centenary issue of *Social Scientist*, the theoretical organ of the CPI-M. It criticised Mao's formulation, that antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions do not exist in watertight compartments but turn into each other, as anti-Marxist In my rejoinder, defending Mao's true exposition of the basic law of dialectics, I proved that caste contradiction is also antagonistic and hence it has to be solved by a social revolution It was, as expected, not published by *Social Scientist* Ambedkar contended that caste contradiction is more antagonistic than slavery and warned Communists and Socialists as early as 1936 in his *Caste Annihilation* that there can be no class-annihilatory socialist revolution in India unless it is preceded by a caste-annihilatory democratic revolution He implied thereby that feudalism in India was not a class one but a caste one He had repeatedly asserted that it is the caste system that is hindering capitalist development Indian capitalists have not emerged out of the labouring classes of the disintegrating feudal society as in Europe, but as shown by D R Gadgil in his *Origins of the Modern Business Class* they have been drawn from the Hindu *bania* castes That is why their political party, the National Congress, did not expand the independence revolution into a caste-annihilatory democratic revolution as demanded by Phuley and Ambedkar And now, the deterioration of anti-caste and anti-class parties into casteist ones shows that the crisis of the caste system has reached revolutionary proportions

Revolutionary Strategy

AFTER the BSP's defeat in the Punjab Assembly elections and before its forming the government in UP in alliance with the BJP, Kanshi Ram had announced that his party would contest the parliamentary elections in alliance with the BJP The BJP, instead of being isolated by the Congress, UF and LF, has succeeded in brahmanising the Lohiaite Samata Party, the Akali Dal of the great anti-caste Gurus and the Ambedkarite BSP It is fast taking the place of the Congress as the national party Its drive for Hindu nationalism is not accompanied only by equating Phuley and Ambedkar with Hedgewar and Golwalkar, but buttressed by the anti-caste ideology of V D Savarkar The Savarkarean ideology represents the ideological make-up of the mass of Hindus and therein lies its strength A common non-brahman Hindu loves his own religion and hence is against alien religions—*Sva-dharme nidhanam sreyah, para-dharmo bhayavahah,* but at the same time he wants equality for his caste and thereby for himself This aspiration of his is expressed by Savarkar in his denunciation of the Sruti-Smriti-Purana-ukta religion The confusion that this creates can be cleared if we prefer to say that it is a contradictory unity of the *ideological* brahmanical religion and its *material* oppressive caste system The contradiction has reached its ultimate stage when its material end can be *alienated* from its ideological end and abolished

The Mandal era has proved that every Indian religion is caste-ridden, and hence this contradiction characterises the overwhelming majority of Indians belonging to all religions If this unity of opposites of the Hindu mind can be taken advantage of by the BJP to perpetuate the religious system, their projection in the incessant struggle between Brahmanism and non-Brahmanism in Indian history and present-day society is the contradiction on which the revolutionary strategy can and should be based It is the revolutionary strategy for accomplishing the caste-annihilating democratic revolution

For this strategy the anti-caste Savarkarites in the BJP and *Sangh Parivar* will have to be included in the caste-annihilatory front The front should draw up a comprehensive programme of caste-annihilating democratic revolution and draft two bills for placing in Parliament The first should be an uncompromising Hindu Code Bill making, among other provisions, inter-caste marriage obligatory But marriage in one's caste is only one of the six characteristics of caste, the others being 1) heredity, 2) hereditary occupation, 3) caste interdiction on food, 4) caste hierarchy and localities, the main division being between the boycotted (*a-varna*) and the non-boycotted (*sa-varna*), and 5) caste councils For eradicating these a comprehensive bill for caste abolition should be drafted After introducing the bills in Parliament, a national campaign for getting them passed should be undertaken by the front As for solving the problems of Ayodhya, Kashi, Mathura and Bodhgaya, I have repeatedly put forward my proposal since 1993

Enlightenment

THE national campaign should be the spearhead of revolutionary democratic Enlightenment in all fields of knowledge and endeavour Reinterpretation and exposition of the *varna-jati* class economics, history, philosophy, literature, arts, science and culture should take place Multilinear historical materialism is the appropriate methodology for this reinterpretation and exposition But reinterpretation and exposition does not create literature and arts of social transformation For their creative guidance new aesthetics is needed Socialist realism has become outdated mainly because of its epistemology of reflectionism Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya has shown in his book, *Lenin the Philosopher,* that Marx took over the reflectionist epistemology from mechanical materialism Though he overcame the apparent limitations of Feurbach, the epistemology that he inherited from Feurbach circumscribed his methodology to class unilinearism and inhibited his methodology from probing the inner motion of history, society and man Thus, Marxism also remained a philosophy of consciousness like all other Western philosophies and hence, having failed to penetrate the subconscious of the peoples of the socialist countries, it could not enable them to become the builders of the new society

The Buddhist philosopher, Vasubandhu (AD 400) in his *Abhidharmakosha* had shown long before Freud (AD 1856-1939) that *citta* (mind) is made up of *samprayukta* (consciousness) and *viprayukta* (subconsciousness) His disciple Dignaga (late AD 400) fashioned non-brahmanical aesthetics on the basis of this combined epistemology of consciousness and subconsciousness to counter the brahmanical poetics The non-brahmanical aesthetics was further developed by Dignaga's disciple Dharmakirti (AD 700) who himself was a distinguished poet The anti-caste equalitarian credo of these philosophers in philosophy and aesthetics becomes clear in a couplet by Dharmakirti occurring in the *svopajna* commentary of his magnum opus *'Pramana-vartika'*

> *Veda-pramanyam, kasyacit kartr-vadah, snane dharmeccha, jativada-avalepah|*
> *Santaparambhah papa-hanaya ca iti dhvasta-prajnane panca-lingani jadye||*
>
> [These are the five signs of foolishness accepting the authority of Veda, belief in god to be the creator and earning merit through holy dip, arrogance of caste and self-torture for destroying sin]

I have reconstructed the Dignagean aesthetics and developed it into Socialist Santrantikism in my Vol II

That is why I have captioned this paper "Invade Bihar with Vihar", Bihar denoting the citadel of the caste system and Vihar the philosophy of Marxism-Ambedkarism ■

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Zeroing in on Public Debt Realities

J. GEORGE

The Haryana Government needs to be complimented for zeroing in on the burgeoning public debt burden sooner than expected Surely, the Zero-Base Budgeting (ZBB) is the technique which would help all service-oriented organisations to pay heed to the rumblings going on at the grassroots level However, a caution needs to be sounded lest the experiment with ZBB becomes a non-starter unlike the earlier attempts in 1979 One would not like to see this attempt at introducing ZBB in Haryana as a mere capriole

The caution is required because it is generally not acceptable to a government organisation to go through a process framework ZBB has necessarily to be viewed as a process where an active involvement of all "providers" of services is required over a period of time Given the propensity of such officials to either avoid or withdraw from addressing the crucial issues of critical blockages in the personnel and roadblocks in an organisation, one is afraid, a radically different and immensely useful tool like ZBB may not be reduced to a one-shot ritual or polemics

Hard Facts

IT may perhaps be illustrative to look at hard facts against which the State is situated This would greatly allay dangers of grave defect of reasoning associated with ZBB notwithstanding the capriciousness of the authorities It has been estimated that the actual expenditure under the non-developmental category grew at an average rate of about 2 53 per cent during the period 1991-95 Consequently the ratio of the total current expenditure to the total capital expenditure spiralled from 3 28 in 1991-92 to 5 04 in the budgetary estimates of the 1995-96 fiscal year The State indeed cannot sustain utilising more than 50 per cent of the Plan outlay for the revenue component giving no returns whatsoever

Expenditure control measures, therefore, are the only viable medium to bring about buoyancy in the public finance of the State The age-old adage "better late than never" is very opportune here as a soft reminder Contrarily, pitfalls awaiting any delayed actions will not be a surprise since the Andhra Pradesh experiences are still fresh and offer innumerable lessons in matters concerning public finance management

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ZBB and Expenditure Control

ALTHOUGH ZBB would be a new tool in use for effective public expenditure management in the State, the concept is not new In this context one is reminded of the indigenous wisdom contained in the local idiom *"Nau ke lakadi, nambe karch"* The important question, therefore, is whether or not the government departments will get into this mode of self-introspection to question their expenditure behaviour

There are empirical evidence to suggest that the necessary and sufficient conditions for a self analysis in an organisation is in the appreciation and practice of the concept "Cognitive Dissonance" (CD) A proper appreciation of CD helps each participant in shedding prejudices and dogmas and thereby in producing effective managers This is what is required in ZBB Through CD the managers are able to listen to and exchange views and ultimately devise programmes that are a welcome change to a majority of people

New Initiatives

THE honing of such skills can be attempted through the Strategic Economic Management Initiatives in Government (SEMIG) The application of SEMIG in ZBB would necessarily follow a process in what is called the octagonal setting The stepwise processes are: building a problem-solving relationship, identifying problem areas and opportunities, analysing the problem, planning a course of action, experimenting and redesigning the action-plan, implementing the optional action-plan and evaluating the results

It is important to notice that under ZBB, budget-making involves more inputs from people who are not necessarily from the audits and accounts department In that respect ZBB is a secular approach and needs to be appreciated. It should be underscored that the centre of gravity and the fulcrum for the octagonal setting of the steps involved in the process is the people of the State.

Triangular Setting of Stakeholders

THE usual socio-politico equation as existing in the present times has three players, namely, the organisation/institution, the methods (incorporating rules and procedures), and the people. The triangle, thus formed, has always been detrimental to the interests of the people or the population. This is generally engineered by the coalition and fusion of interests between the institution and the methods. Thus the triangular setting in actual practice gets converted into a binary setting. The major loser in such a setting is the population as they do not get the desired services despite a number of policies, schemes and appropriate fund allocations. In this binary setting the institution and methods find an easy and pliable ally in another set of three players, namely, the policy, the attitude and the politics.

With respect to ZBB, while there exists unanimity amongst the trinity of the policy, the politics and the attitude, for a meaningful SEMIG intervention it is the need of the hour to change the mindset of the government institutions and the methods especially used by the audits and accounts professionals. This task, though daunting, is not beyond solution. A beginning has been made and the process of ZBB must be allowed to continue in a professional manner. The purists may argue that in a regime where professionalism is taxed to fill up the otherwise depleting public exchequer, bringing about professionalism would be a far cry. Here, the purists need to be reminded of the dichotomy between the form and the content.

Thrust Areas for ZBB

GIVEN the political will and the policy statement for adopting a ZBB, the first change would be to clearly articulate the objectives of each department. These statements have to be evolved from within the departments by each Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or Head of Department (HOD). In this statement-making process outside help would be required as organisational introspection is an anathema to all government departments. Therefore, the important question is will such a process begin? The training and orientation programmes on continuous and periodic intervals are the only options available with the State to initiate such a process. The State (both the legislature and the executive) should stop considering *training and orientation* as a mere senseless irrelevance during the period of economic reforms.

In corporate business world the organisations take their personnel at periodic intervals to a secluded place for a retreat. In retreats, a facilitator, naturally from outside the organisation, initiates the process of self- and organisational analyses. In India such opportunities abound but have become repertoire of the socio-cultural practices. For instance, during the rainy season one sees a group of "*kawadias*" trudging back to their homes or destinations after collecting the holy water from Rishikesh. What is noticeable in this annual feature is that all participants are constantly introspecting while they traverse the long distances as they cannot—rather do not—converse with one another in order to conserve their energy. Similar is the experience when one undertakes a "*padayatra*" besides observing the ground realities.

ZBB in the initial stages is like a "*padayatra*" and everyone must experience it. Such exposures in the andragosist's terminology is called "intentional learning" and there is no escaping it. However, the ingenuity of the Indian decision-makers devised a way out for not undergoing this "*padayatra*" has like experience. They have suggested that instead of starting a ZBB exercise from scratch (zero) one must start at 80 per cent of the previous year's budget estimates. This is a sure prescription for failure and must be avoided if the vicious circle among various trinity is to be re-engineered into a virtuous circle. The point often missed here is that during the "*padayatra*" experience an organisation or a department is enabled to reflect and thereby evolve a participatory mode for re-engineering the department as opposed to the prescriptive-mode *a la* doctor and patient. It may be pointed out that in a prescriptive mode not only does the department not change, the consultants employed to diagnose and provide prescriptions get richer at the cost of the institution. The emerging market forces provide opportunities to both the modes. Which way is Haryana going to go—the exploitative way through prescription or the enabling and enriching way through participation-partnership should not be a difficult question to answer if and only if expenditure control is the main aim.

Lead Sector(s) in ZBB

FOR ZBB, Haryana is in a comfortable position in the social welfare field. And this happens to be the thrust area for the present regime. They are riding he women's concern bandwagon through the prohibition route The relative ease within the Social Welfare Department exists in the areas of Women and Child Development (W & CD) At the State level, while there exists a commitment in the form of a State Action Plan for the Child (SPAC), translation of such a set of major goals into a district or a block level action-plan can be done under the ZBB within a week's time This sector is important on many counts, the most important of which is that during a crisis or resource crunch period the social services sector being the softest target, budgetary supports are withdrawn immediately

The argument for enhanced budgetary support to W & CD should not be taken to mean that efficiency of services are given a decent burial As a matter of fact a better and efficient performance can more than offset the declining budgetary support except that expansion of services may not be possible For illustration, the per *anganwari* centre (AWC) expenditure has increased from Rs 3840 in 1975-76 to Rs 30,863 in 1995-96 whereas the number of AWCs increased from 69 centres in 1975-76 to 12,484 AWCs in 1995-96 Assuming an average of 30 beneficiary equivalents regularly utilising the services of each AWC each day of the year, the daily total expenditure in 1995-96 works out to a mere Rs 2 82 per beneficiary equivalent per day Can one provide a quality and efficient service on this grant? This is a moot question

Using ZBB one can evolve an efficient delivery system and let there be no dispute over that ZBB is a tool which when properly utilised in a participatory mode drastically alters the capriciousness of the authorities This is also an opportunity to give a lie to the imperialist dictum "penny wise pound foolish" ■

(The views expressed here are purely of the author and should not be purported to the institution to which the author belongs
—Editor)

BLUE PENCIL

Netaji in Russia?

G S BHARGAVA

Receiving a rap on the knuckles can be pleasant and necessary when it is from someone who is knowledgeable and intellectually wholesome Even at my age The valued friend has caught me napping when I wrote recently (June 29) that there was no English daily from Hyderabad before independence The correspondent whom I would have gratefully identified but for his strict insistence on anonymity reminded me that *The Deccan Chronicle* was there, even if under a different management, before the 'police action' Secondly, and more importantly,—it is news to me—"much earlier there was *Hyderabad Bulletin* edited by someone called Pothan Joseph," he rubbed it in

Where I faltered badly, according to him, was in failing to acknowledge Pothan Joseph's contribution to the building up of the *Deccan Herald* launched by the revered and far-sighted K N Guruswamy I plead guilty on all counts

Talking of Pothan Joseph, there is a story that C Y Chintamani commented critically on Pothan's flair for being a rolling stone when he approached the celebrated *Leader* editor for a job Pat came Pothan's answer it makes no difference to the stone whether it gathers moss or not! Twenty years after Pothan ceased to be the *Dawn* editor he was the talk of journalists in Karachi, as I found when I was there in the early 1960s

◆

MEANWHILE, Nikhil-*da's Mainstream*—now edited by young Sumit—has published the English version of a Russian article paying homage to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose It was first published in a Russian newspaper *Patriot* in January last as a centenary tribute by a professor of the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences, Alexander Kolesnikov As far as I know, it is the first Russian acknowledgment of the possibility of Netaji going to the then Soviet Union after the end of the 1939-45 war in Europe, that is, after his alleged death in a plane crash in Taiwan While confirming the suspicions in the respect of Netaji devotees like Prof Samar Guha, it also makes a case for the opening up of the Russian and German archives of the period for authentic light on the important subject

From haloed Netaji to 'forest brigand' Veerappan is a far cry but the newsy story of his kidnapping nine Karnataka forest department officials and offering to surrender conditionally is full of human interest, also for readers outside the area of his operations in the jungles on the Mysore (Karnataka)-Tamil Nadu border. But it is being underplayed, if not crowded out by most upcountry newspapers The *Deccan Herald* rightly led with the story of the kidnapping of the officials and his "threat to kill them if he is not granted his wish to lead a 'normal' life". It could have been a 'scoop' but for the bare-boned PTI version used by other newspapers According to a later report in the same newspaper, which has despatched staffers to the place where Veerappan is expected to surrender, the Karnataka Government has conceded his demand for transfer of the criminal cases against him to Tamil Nadu It said there are six of them pending in Mysore R. Gopal, editor the Tamil magazine, *Nakkeeran*—who was once the target of Jayalalitha's ire—is the go-between the Tamil Nadu police and Veerappan

C.R Irani's Caveat column in *The Statesman* has recently shed light on a criminal defamation case against S Ratnatunga, editor of the well-known Colombo daily, *Sunday Times* Filed by the Sri Lankan Government, it is against an item in the gossip column of the newspaper which the judge, whose promotion has been reportedly held up pending disposal of the case, said, implied 'amorous liaison'. Since it referred to President Chandrika Kumaratunga alleging that she had attended a party hosted by a friend at a hotel past midnight and spent 90 minutes 'in the heat of the silent night,' a stiff sentence was awarded. But surprisingly, its execution has been suspended for seven long years with the purpose of 'ending dissent' as Irani sees it on the basis of the judge's indication of its commutation or even waiver if the accused apologises Irani points out that the criminal justice system as it operated in the case is outdated and unsuited to the present times He has also added that the courts in India would have indeed treated the case differently especially where the freedom of the press has a bearing

There has been apparently no break in the violence against journalists in different parts of the country According to a PTI report from Mumbai, a reporter of the *Asian Age*, Arundhita Ramaswamy, was attacked when she went to interview the underworld don, Arun Gawli, at 'his infamous den' at Dagdi chawl in south central Bombay The attackers were Gawli's supporters who pounced on her at the entrance to the chawl. What struck me about the report, which was undoubtedly important, was the description of the don's place of residence as a 'infamous den' without the quotes One thought the agencies avoided the use of adjectives even when necessary

Last week, I referred to a *Deccan Chronicle* report of a ban by a Hyderabad-based Muslim organisation, Tahreek Muslim Shabban (TMS), described as a 'third force' after Sultan Salahuddin Owaisi's Majlis-e-Ittehadul Musalmeen and its counter, Majlis Bachao Tahreek, on *burqa*-clad women going to the cinema theatres. The *Andhra Pradesh Times* has given the sequel to it in the shape of a warning by the city Police Commissioner, R P Singh, that the police will move against 'those who try physically to prevent' women in *purdah* from going to the cinema houses Undeterred, the TMS has decided to enforce the ban from August 1 If the so-called third force is keen on demonstrating its following among the Muslims, it should not use force to carry out its diktat but see how many people honour it spontaneously

I am afraid, however, that the days of the people voluntarily responding to the call of the leaders are gone It is especially so when the so-called bandhs are observed Shopkeepers, especially, down their shutters for fear of violence and not in support of the professed protest

Which brings into focus a *Deccan Chronicle* item from Rajahmundry in Andhra Pradesh of three Congress leaders of the district having gone on 'a fast unto death' in recent weeks to press their demands—of purely local interest—and got away with it. The item reads "The practice of undertaking fasts by politicians with their wives has attained great popularity in the district These fasts are costly in the sense that enormous publicity through posters and other media is given to attract public attention These politicians are very wealthy and influential, though living in the by-lanes of villages " A meaty item on the limits of political hypocrisy masquerading as Gandhian technique but very poorly written

Incidentally, the tendency of the leaders to rope in their wives has raised the hackles of women activists The convenor of the Progressive Organisation of Women has denounced it as 'manifestation of male chauvinism' because 'the husbands are using their wives as pawns in their political game'

Meanwhile, the 56th annual conference of the Indian Languages Newspapers Association (ILNA) in New Delhi has brought together a galaxy of veteran editors associated with some of the most respected newspapers in the country As the Information and Broadcasting Minister, Jaipal Reddy, said at the conference, the language newspapers were in the forefront of the country's freedom struggle when journalism was a mission One spotted among them Ratilal Sheth (*Janmaboomi*), Mammen Mathew (*Malayala Manorama*), Vijay Chopra (*Punjab Kesri*), Vishwa Bandhu Gupta (*Tej*) and many others ■

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS (JULY 20-26, 1997)

NATIONAL

July 20

- In a statement issued in Chennai, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK President M Karunanidhi says "If the RJD came forward to extend support to the Gujral Government on the lines of the Congress, then it could be accepted and if Yadav was cleared of the charges by the Court, he can be admitted into the Front"
- Prime Minister I K Gujral tells Home TV that he told Pakistan Prime Minister that the two countries have tried war for 50 years, now let's give a try to friendship for 10 years and the response was "very positive"
- In the same interview the Prime Minister said "Corruption, I say with great regret and pain, has seeped into the veins of this nation" He added he had no magic wand to end it overnight
- Asom Gana Parishad Executive Committee suspends senior Party MLA and former Home Minister Bhrigu Kumar Phukan from the primary membership of the party for alleged anti-party activities
- Defence sources tell PTI that Pakistan was making serious efforts to tip its missiles with nuclear warheads

July 21

- Leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party Sharad Pawar says the five-member fact-finding team of senior Congress leaders has "collected enough evidence to oust the BJP-Shiv Sena combine" and impose President's Rule in Maharashtra Congress spokesman VN Gadgil makes it clear that the death of 11 Dalits in the firing ordered by the Maharashtra Government will dominate the monsoon session of Parliament
- Former Prime Minister VP Singh says over the telephone from London that the law must be firm and the guilty must be punished Expressing surprise that his not naming Laloo Prasad Yadav is being interpreted as support for him, VP Singh underlines imperative to address the basic lacunae in the system responsible for widespread corruption
- Justice D D Dhaliwal of the Patna High Court hearing Laloo Prasad Yadav's petition for anticipatory bail, rules that "the arrest of the petitioner is stayed till his petition is disposed of"
- UF Government decides to defer the women's bill until a consensus is evolved in a meeting of the UF Steering Committee and after a discussion with the Congress and the BJP
- Jammu & Kashmir Assembly Speaker Ali Muhammad Naik, returning to Srinagar from his hometown Tral, narowly escapes while his escort's car following him is blown in a mine blast killing three constables and injuring another three
- Government of Karnataka accepts the demand of sandalwood smuggling don Veerappan to transfer all cases against him to Tamil Nadu, as one of the terms of his surrender, subject to the approval of the Supreme Court

July 22

- Leader of the newly formed Akhil Bharatiya Sena Arun Gavli, alleged to be a ganglord, is arrested in Mumbai following the arrest of his two aides for the previous day's assault on Ms Anindita Ramaswamy, *The Asian Age* journalist at Dagdi Chawl
- Information and Broadcasting Minister S Jaipal Reddy notifies the Prasar Bharati Act giving autonomy to Doordarshan and All India Radio with effect from September 15
- Sharad Pawar, Chairman of the Select Committee which is examining the Broadcast Bill, says they will have to go to the US, UK and other countries to gain first hand information about their laws which are being quoted by foreign broadcasters
- CBI Director R.C Sharma asks his investigators to wrap up cases of a political nature as soon as possible
- Bihar Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav declares in the Assembly that he did not care for anybody and would not step down
- Bihar Assembly passes by voice vote a resolution recommending to the Union Government to create a Jharkhand State
- Janata Dal President Sharad Yadav tells the PM that bombs were hurled at the rally addressed by Railway Minister Ram Vilas Paswan at Hajipur and Sitamarhi Sharad Yadav demands imposition of President's Rule in Bihar

July 23

- Monsoon session of Parliament begins with the vociferous demand of the Congress to sack the Shiv Sena-BJP Government of Maharashtra for its violence against the Dalits and the brutal attack on the residence of Congress MLA Chhagan Bhujbal, and the BJP led equally loud demand for the dismissal of the charge-sheeted Laloo Prasad Yadav Government in Bihar The Congress stages a walkout in the Lok Sabha taking umbrage at a remark made by Home Minister Indrajit Gupta about the antecedents of Bhujbal Order is restored after Speaker PA Sangma reprimands members and asks the leaders to restrain their partymen The Rajya Sabha is adjourned within 20 minutes of the opening of the session
- Congress President and leader of the Congress Parliamentary Party tells the CPP executive that the Congress will not withdraw support to the UF Government
- Special Judge VB Gupta discharges former Union Ministers Ajit Panja, PV Shiv Shankar, former UP Governor, Moti Lal Vora, BJP leader Yashwant Sinha and four Jain brothers accused in the Rs 65 crore Jain *hawala* case saying there was no *prima facie* evidence
- Union Information and Broadcasting Minister S Jaipal Reddy says at a press conference that the notification banning DTH operations in the country was "purely temporary"

July 24

- Patna High Court rejects the anticipatory bail petition of Bihar Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav, whose counsel, former Additional Advocate General Sashi Anugraha Narain Sinha, flies in a State plane to New Delhi to file an appeal in the Supreme Court
- CPI-M General Secretary Harkishan Singh Surjeet says in an interview with *The Asian Age*, the Congress is full of self-seekers, it lacks a political platform and is trying to grow through manoeuvres
- Government of India confers the highest civilian honour, Bharat Ratna, on Gulzari Lal Nanda, the centenarian

Gandhian, twice Acting Prime Minister of India and Minister in the Cabinets of Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi, and posthumously on Aruna Asaf Ali, the legendary leader of the 'Quit India' movement and life-long crusader against social injustice, communalism and imperialist military blocs

- Well-known Bengali novelist and tribal welfare activist Mahasweta Devi gets the Magsaysay Award for journalism, literature and creative communication arts
- Journalist R Rajgopal releases transcripts and videotape of his talks with sandalwood smuggling don Veerappan which record him saying he would kill the nine Karanataka Forest Department officials held by him if his demands for general amnesty are not met by July 31
- Dr Shankar Dayal Sharma, in his address to the nation before demitting the office of the President, calls for sincere commitment to reach the fruits of development to the poorest and for upholding the moral values espoused by Mahatma Gandhi

July 25

- Bihar Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav resigns and his wife Rabri Devi, elected leader by the Rashtriya Janata Dal Legislature Party, is sworn in as the CM, she is to seek vote of confidence on July 28 The United Front decides, however, not to admit the RJD into the UF
- Prime Minister I K Gujral, in a *suo moto* statement in both the Houses, informs Parliament that the Issac-Muivah faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland has agreed to a three-month ceasefire from August 1
- Chief Minister of Nagaland S C Jamir is reported to have decided not to participate in the Church-initiated peace meeting with Naga rebels in Atlanta (US)
- K R Narayanan is sworn in as the tenth President of India In his very first speech he asks the older generation to set an example for the youth and to resotre the moral fibre of the nation
- Congress and the United Front decide to field a joint candidate for the election of the Vice-President of India
- CPI General Secretary A B Bardhan rules out support for the Congress motion to dismiss Maharashtra Government for violence against Dalits
- Republican Party leader Ramdas Athwale demands a ban on Arun Shourie's book, *Worshipping False Gods Ambedkar and the Facts which have been Erased,* stating that the book distorts the image of Dr B R Ambedkar

July 26

- Prime Minister I K Gujral, addressing a public meeting in Qazikund (Kashmir) after laying the foundation stone of a new railway line linking the town with Baramulla, offers to start unconditional talks with the Kashmiri militants for seeking an amicable and peaceful solution to the imbroglio in the State
- Congress and the United Front agree to field Governor of Andhra Pradesh Krishna Kant as their joint candidate for election to the office of the Vice-President of India
- A BBC spokesman says the Government of India denied them permission to film Salman Rushdie's prize-winning book *Midnight Children* in India because some scenes were found to be offensive to Indian sensibilities

INTERNATIONAL

July 20

- Bangladesh and India agree to share the water of Teesta, following the landmark treaty signed last year for sharing the Ganga waters Bangladesh Water Resources Minister Abdur Razzak tells a news conference after his talks in Dhaka with his Indian counterpart Sis Ram Ola that India has also indicated its willingness to consider giving technical assistance in building a dam to harness the Ganga waters
- Pakistan press urges Premier Nawaz Sharif to oppose, during his visit to the US in September, any move to give India a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, and criticises Pakistan envoy to UN Ahmad Kamal for leaving New York for Islamabad when India was lobbying for the seat
- Joint Indo-Nepal Working Group, meeting in Kathmandu, agrees to strengthen the existing mechanisms of management of the more than 1000-km border stretch between the two countries
- Unionists, who want Northern Ireland to remain British, threaten to walk out of the negotiations in a row over the ground rules allowing Sinn Fien to take part in the dialogue without the IRA surrendering arms before the talks

July 21

- A television documentary, shown on BBC-2, basing itself on declassified secret British papers, affirms that Aung San, the legendary fighter for the freedom of Burma, father of present-day pro-democracy leader Suu Kyi was assassinated on July 19, 1947 while presiding over a Cabinet meeting inside the Parliament House, with the help and connivance of powerful British interests
- Russian President Boris Yeltsin asks his Defence Minister Igor Sergeyev to launch publicity to explain the need for military reforms, so that people might know the content of the reforms and politicians might make the right judgements

July 22

- Candidates of Nepal's Communist Party in the elections to local bodies win chairmanships of 44 out of 56 committees, 38 vice-chairmanships and 450 out of 662 contested seats
- Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's accountability cell claims to have discovered that Asif Ali Zardari, the husband of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, had opened a virtual employment bureau at his residence for the top posts in the public sector Chairman of Pakistan Steel Sajjad Husain is reported to have got the post for a promised Rs 100 crores gratification
- Officials reveal in Jakarta that South African President Nelson Mandela, on a visit to Indonesia, held a secret meeting with Timor rebel leader Xanana Gusman at the state guest house in the knowledge and with the approval of President Suharto The substance of the talks is to remain secret
- Cambodian leader Hun Sen says there won't be any more war in the country
- Swiss Bankers' Association says in Zurich that a list of pre-1945 accounts in Swiss banks including assets left by the Holocaust victims will be published in newspapers in 28 countries alongwith local phone numbers enabling heirs to claim the money
- A & E Television Networks releases a top secret US document of October 1946 to reveal that the Vatican stored 200 million Swiss Frances, mostly in gold coins, for fascists just after the Second World War to keep the money

out of Allied hands

July 23

- Pakistan President Farooq Ahmed Khan Leghari tells visiting Japanese Foreign Minister Yukihikp Ikedo "It is not possible for Islamabad to make an unilateral commitment without a simultaneous pledge by India on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)"
- Inter Services Public Relations Directorate issues a statement that Islamabad test fired two indigenous missiles—surface to-air *Anza* and the anti-tank guided missile *Baktarshikan*
- Sri Lanka Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamer says there was no need to replace the 1987 accord with India by a friendship treaty as the relations between the two countries were already on an excellent footing
- Cairo daily *Al-Ahram* reveals that Iran is seeking a military pact with Egypt to counter the Israeli-Turkish defence cooperation
- US State Department's first ever report on religious freedom, welcomed by President Bill Clinton calling it "part of America's larger commitment", says that Chinese authorities have suppressed several hundred Christian groups this year, raiding their houses of worship, subjecting leaders to long hours of interrogation and beatings
- Writing in the London tabloid *The Sun*, British Premier Tony Blair says the Unionist rejection of Anglo-Irish proposals for paramilitary disarmament in Northern Ireland would be a "setback but not the end of the peace process"
- Russian Communists, who dominate the Duma, the Lower House, attack President Boris Yeltsin who vetoes a bill passed but the House restricting minority religious sects Boris Yeltsin says the bill violates the Constitution granting freedom of conscience

July 24

- Anti-Taliban forces move within rocketing distance of Kabul, six rockets land around the airport and a plane drops a single bomb in the vicinity of the Presidential palace
- Opening the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysian Prime Minsiter Mahathir Mohammad rejects Western criticism of the decision to admit Burma in the ASEAN and accuses "rogue speculators" of orchestrating a well-planned effort to undermine the economies of all the ASEAN countries by destabilising their currencies
- Cambodian strongman Hun Sen says the ASEAN decision not to accept Cambodia as a full member was a big mistake which may force the country to look beyond its neighbours for support and investment
- Israeli Parliament passes a bill that any move to withdraw from the Golan Heights, the Syrian territory captured in 1967 and annexed in 1981, must be approved by a two-third majority in the Parliament
- US, UK and French diplomats meet in New York to discuss plans to build an African Peace-keeping Support Group which has scope for including Africans to cope with crises in the troubled continent The Group declares its intention to work in collaboration with the UN and the Organisation of African Unity
- Labour Government of Britain announces plans to end free and full-time higher education from 1998, to ask students, except the poorest, to pay tuition fees and convert grants into loans for students

July 25

- Taliban-run Radio Shariat annonces that the Taliban Foreign Minister, reported to have been captured in May by the anti-Taliban forces, has been safely taken from Balkh to Kunduz "thanks to the cooperation of the faithful"
- Sri Lanka Navy claims to have destroyed three large boats among a LTTE flotilla of 12 boats and have sunk at least 50 Tamil rebels
- Two representatives of the Pennsylvania-based Pearl Buck Foundation, on their way to present to Burmese pro-democracy leader Suu Kyi the *Woman of the Year* award, are stopped by the military and police on the road to her residence in Rangoon and not allowed to see her
- Indonesian Opposition leader Megawati's supporters declare that they would ignore a ban and go ahead with the plan to observe the anniversary of last year's anti-government riots
- US Defence Department begins notifying nearly 100,000 Gulf War victims that they might have been exposed to Iraqi poison gas but apparently in quantity too small to have caused health problems
- Russian President Boris Yeltsin tells Moscow Radio that it was important to "keep up the rhythm" of military reforms and to reduce the armed forces from 1 7 million to 1 2 million

Julu 26

- Pakistan Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub Khan tells BBC in an interview that Pakistan is ready to sign a treaty with India on non-use of nuclear weapons "even though it would put Pakistan at a disadvantage'
- Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad, elaborating on his earlier statement that some rogue speculator was making a bid to undermine South-East Asian currencies, says "I am confirming that it was George Soros I was talking about" Soros, the billionaire known for his capacity to move global markets, had denied his involvement
- British Foreign Office spokesman says after Foreign Secretary Robin Cook's meeting with Pakistan Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub Khan that he welcomed recent resumption of talks between India and Pakistan and that the Labour Government was against "imposition" of any outside solution to the Kashmir issue but it is willing to help resolve the issue if both India and Pakistan so desire
- Thousands of soldiers are reported to be battling the rising waters of the river Oder between Germany and Poland Rainstorms have breached dykes submerging vast areas of agricultural land in Poland and the Czech Republic killing more than a 100 and now threatening the Oderbruch plateau, the breadbasket of Germany ■

Corrigendum

The first sentence of the last paragraph of Subrata Lahiry's article "American Design in India, Pakistan and Kashmir" [on page 32 in *Mainstream* (July 19, 1997)] should read

> Let me now state one off-shoot of this game-plan if this policy is extended or made to extend under natural pressure to East and West Punjab and East and West Bengal, for example, India shall once again become the old real India or Bharat

This error is regretted —*Editor*

PRAFUL BIDWAI India and "Sachs' Therapy"

(Continued from page 5)

powers

This was not inevitable "Shock therapy" was not necessary As more enlightened economists argued, it was futile to try to "get prices right" at one go For instance, Prof J K Galbraith warned that those clamouring for "pristine" free-market capitalism were "wrong to the point of a mental vacuity or clinical proportions" He recommended gradual release of non-essential consumer goods to the market, and generous subsidies and loans for food, housing and essentials Once enterprises got autonomy from ministries, it did not greatly matter who owned them After all, in the West, stockholders who own company shares are largely unknown to the management "Nor is this a time," said Galbraith, "for lectures from the IMF on austerity"

But that was not to be Sachs & Co proceeded to inflict cruelties characteristic of social-Darwinist capitalism upon Russia, out of dogma, if not vindictiveness—although privatisation manifestly failed, divested firms (such as once profitable auto-maker ZIL), went bankrupt, and human misery visibly worsened What they were creating was not Western-style capitalism, but a "disastrous economic order envisaged in early capitalist doctrine and still celebrated by its more devout theologians ", which would be unacceptable in the West, "where the system has survived only because of its capacity, in a liberal political context, to adapt"

India's Turn

SACHS is now going to play a part in determining the destiny of 950 million Indians Some of what he is going to say is already clear Just last week, he published a paper rooting for the controversial Tata-Singapore Airlines project—failure to approve which "will adversely affect" foreign investment—and pleading for lower corporate taxes As argued in *The Economic Times* (June 16), this is a recipe for overcapacity in an already over saturated industry It will kill Indian Airlines, a public asset, besides distorting competition TSA will be able to rig the domestic and long-distance markets through cross-subsidising or discounting The consumer will lose But that outcome would only be a faithful, if small-scale, repetition of Russia's experience Bigger repetitions await us—unless our leaders come to their senses ■

(Courtesy *The Times of India*)

SUJATA SINGH Politics of Pay Package

(Continued from page 6)

and 70 years In Japan and Hong Kong it was 65 years and 60 in China, Pakistan and the Philippines

Its consultant, the Institute of Applied Manpower Research (IAMR), took the following factors into consideration while recommending an increase in the retirement age—life expectancy, span of service, old age dependency ratio, physical health and mental capabilities, productivity in old age, and expert opinion

The Commission cited that increase in longevity, improved health standards, experience and wisdom of senior employees, the need for maintaining uniformity in the age of retirement between industrial and non-industrial categories, maximum utilisation of qualified professionals, protecting the interests of unprivileged sections of society as also highly qualified persons who because of joining service at higher ages may be unable to render 33 years of service required for full pension, were sufficient reasons for raising the retirement age to 60 years

The Commission failed to cite the global efforts at downsizing the government in order to retain a lean and efficient workforce, be especially trained to handle the complex tasks of government Implied in the argument is the factor of high public investment towards building a "smart bureaucracy",[5] and then drawing the maximum returns from it

However, the government's decision not to raise the retirement age may have been taken on purely political grounds If, on the other hand, the government is serious about restructuring and downsizing the government, it will have to pay serious attention to this issue. After all, public money will be invested in making "smart bureaucracy", a reality

If we employ the logic that it would be premature to raise the retirement age without first restructuring and downsizing the government, how do we explain the government's decision not to accept the Commission's recommendation for the abolition of overtime allowance? Is the government understaffed? Or is it in anticipation of a downsized government? If the decision to raise the retirement age could wait, so could the decision to provide overtime allowance

Another area where the views of the Pay Commission and government fail to converge, concerns the decision to stick to the five-day working week

The Pay Commission in this matter seems to have been influenced by the two evaluation studies of the five-day week system, undertaken by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances in February 1987 and November 1988 respectively These studies revealed that work output in the selected Ministries and departments had suffered in some areas of activity whereas it showed improvement in certain other areas The root cause for the decline in work output was attributed to the non-observance of the stipulated working hours that a five-day week entailed[6]

Hence, the Pay Commission recommended that the overnment revert back to the six-day week, with econd Saturday being an off-day It is surprising that he Commission was not influenced by the global osition in this matter Whatever the reasons, the overnment did well in retaining the five-day week avings in energy consumption, reduced pressure on he public transport system and other wastages ssociated with public offices are good enough reasons or retaining the five-day week What is required is a etter enforcement policy for making the five-day week ffective It is indeed sad that fifty years of independence as yet to produce a "work ethic", and "work culture" n us

Among the recommendations of the Pay Commission hat have been accepted by the government, the most ositive measure that may have a far-reaching impact n the economy, pertains to house rent allowance (30 per cent of pay) The Commission had, however, recommended 30 per cent of the maximum of the pay scale

Housing provides one of the most fertile grounds for corruption and scams The government is to be mainly held responsible for the unimaginative housing policy With the unrealistically low house rent allowance, a large number of government servants have been living in government houses/flats, and earning a handsome rent from their own houses/flats This has resulted in a severe strain on public housing On its part the government has been using up prime land for government housing

The increase in house rent allowance may well fetch some positive returns in that government employees may well be tempted to live in their own accommodation This in turn may reduce the pressure on public housing considerably

Actually, the government needs to get out of housing or at least be selective about it Employees spending their entire careers in one place should be provided every incentive to not only purchase but also live in their own houses/flats

Pay Parity with the Private Sector

PAY parity between the public and private sectors is one such issue which will continue to be debated It may be argued that even with the present pay hike, the gap between public and private sector pay persists However, we need to first ask ourselves some basic questions before making any pronouncements Have sincere attempts been made to quantify the privileges and benefits the public employee enjoys in terms of housing and medical facilities, pension and other benefits he continues to receive after retirement? Once this is done, it will be possible to compare the two The higher civil servants are housed in palatial bungalows with garage and servants' quarters attached, in exclusive places like Shah Jahan Road Others down the line settle for places like Pandara Park, Moti Bagh and R K Puram Further there are no refined yardsticks to measure the performance of a public employee He enjoys a sense of security that comes from working in an immortal organisation[7]

After retirement, the public employee continues to be a beneficiary of the welfare state Though medical facilities are far from satisfactory, they are there nonetheless Receiving a pension is again no small comfort Compared to a public employee, a private sector employee is under the constant pressures of a capitalist economy We need to keep all the above mentioned factors in mind before attempting to compare the two

Pay Commission and the Military

THE Pay Commission, so far as the military is concerned, fails to address some basic issues that men and women in uniform face It points out that the role of the armed forces should be minimised in counter-insurgency operations[8] With the highly politicised police forces, is there any other alternative to the military?

Though the government has tried to rectify the grave injustice meted out to the armed forces by the Pay Commission, there is still scope for further improvement The middle ranks of the Army continue to be neglected These are the levels where major shortages were detected A hike in the salary of a brigadier is no comfort to those below, since most of them will be retiring at levels below the brigadier, and that too at a very young age

Other issues include the exclusion of soldiers involved in counter-insurgency operations as well as soldiers posted at high altitude and hazardous areas from special allowance An allowance of Rs 7000 has been provided only for soldiers posted in Siachen

The matric-qualified jawan has been classified as unskilled, though they are trained in radio communications, weaponry and allied advanced technology A committee has now been appointed to look into this matter

Overall, the Commission has failed to take a holistic view in the case of the armed forces Perhaps, as a civilian group the Commission could not perceive the problems of the armed forces ■

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Edited and published by Sumit Chakravartty *for* PERSPECTIVE PUBLICATIONS PRIVATE LTD., 1E/12, "Sewak House" (First Floor), Jhandewalan Extension, New Delhi-110055 Tel 7516763, 7516893 Fax 7519838 *Printed at* NEW DELHI PRINTERS, 20/7 Old Market, West Patel Nagar, New Delhi-110008 *Editor* Sumit Chakravartty *Editorial Adviser* Nikhil Chakravartty *General Manager* Praveen Mehta *Executive Manager* Jasjit Kay Nagra

Mainstream

VOL XXXV No 35 August 9,1997 Rs 7

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

Gandhi's Lonely Furrow

HARISH CHANDOLA

Nagaland Ceasefire and Isak Swu

C.P. CHANDRASEKHAR and JAYATI GHOSH

ASEAN Currency Crisis : Lessons for India

UPENDRA BAXI

Enron Rape of Rule of Law

R.M. PAL

Analysing Police Firing in a Mumbai Suburb

PRADEEP KUMAR ON "UTTARAKHAND MOVEMENT : AREAS OF PERIPHERAL SUPPORT"

Face of Intolerance

As the country prepares to befittingly observe the fiftieth anniversary of our independence next week the dismal scenario allround raises a pertinent query is there any cause for celebration? Such a view was expressed early this year by none other than he head of the caretaker government in our neighbouring country (before Pakistan went to the hustings to elect a popular government) who lamented over the equally depressing situation prevailing there Besides the existing problems of poverty, unemployment, destitution which have defied solution in the past fifty years, corruption and criminalisation of the polity have assumed alarming proportions in this part of the world That this state of affairs threatens the very edifice of democracy which we in India have tried to sustain in the post-independence period as our most durable achievement does not bear repetition Needless to also add, the increasing recourse to sectarian violence with the vested interests' use of communal and caste hatred too poses a major challenge to democracy in today's India

Of late democracy is in peril due to the growing expressions of intolerance as well Such expressions were an anathema to the standard-bearers of our freedom struggle, notably Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose The last few days have witnessed several instances of such intolerance which, like the mounting incidence of violence, militates against the values the Father of the Nation had upheld while waging his resolute battle to end alien rule and secure *swaraj* for the nation On the one hand Shiv Sena supremo Bal Thackeray has issued in Mumbai a *firmaan*—on the lines of what he had said while launching his agitation against South Indian residents of Bombay some years ago when his party was not in power in the State as it is today—banning Railway Minister Ram Vilas Paswan's entry into Maharashtra, while on the other hand Congress stalwarts, headed by a personality who till the other day dreamt of becoming the occupant of the Rashtrapati Bhavan after Dr Shankar Dayal Sharma (by edging out the distinguished K R Narayanan at the very stage of candidate selection), have been burning a controversial book by an eminent journalist-writer that seeks to denigrate Dr B R Ambedkar and demanding that the publication be proscribed Both these steps merit unreserved condemnation as they betray, at the highest levels of our polity, blatant intolerance that no civilised society can countenance This intolerance is also revealed in another form in the abduction (and possible killing) of the noted voluntary organiser, Sanjoy Ghose, by the militants of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) branding him as an alleged RAW agent Another manifestation of the same malaise is in the spectacle of Laloo Prasad Yadav's followers going berserk in the streets and towns of Bihar to enforce their 'bandh' in protest against the former CM's legitimate detention by the CBI on specific charges of involvement in the multi-crore fodder scam

These instances are fresh reminder of the fact that even if we can justifiably boast of India being the world's largest democracy, this democracy has yet to come of age And notwithstanding the proven durability of our experiment with democracy the threat of it

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Letter from National Campaign for People's Right to Information (Rajasthan)

This is to inform you that the State level Right to Information dharna *which began on May 26 lifted on July 17, 1997 after one of our major demands was met On July 15, the Deputy CM called a Press Conference wherein he presented an* Extraordinary Gazette Notification *dated June 30, 1996 wherein the Panchayat Rules had been notified Under Sections 321 to 328 the citizen gets the right to information as promised by the CM on April 5, 1995 in the Assembly*

We are as puzzled as the press and others are about the curious way in which a six-month old notification was suddenly brought to light The announcement of the notification on July 15, 1997 was the first time the government had publicly conceded the citizens right to information backed by legal entitlement All previous statements had spoken of numerous practical difficulties in giving such an entitlement and to look in to which a Cabinet Sub-Committee under the Deputy CM was appointed as late as June 6, a full five months after the apparently 'impractical' entitlement was already conceded!

The order is only the first step in a long campaign It also needs to be extended to other departments Most importantly, the order needs to be put to use and its efficacy tested We are pressing on with the use of the Gazette Notification by asking for information from the Panchayat bodies We request you to use the order and send the feedback to the Campaign Failure to provide information, with reasons in writing, will be justiciable

We also take this opportunity to thank you for your support during this crucial phase of the struggle

With greetings and in solidarity,

Jaipur
July 27, 1997

Aruna Roy
(for the National Campaign)

being undermined from within remains potent and should not be underestimated However, the sole redeeming feature is that these developments have generated widespread resentment across the political spectrum and beyond Thackeray's *firmaan* against Paswan, the Dalit leader capable of mobilising the most downtrodden segments of society in the State, has been roundly condemned by all parties except the BJP (the Sena's ally) which too has been forced to adopt a defensive posture even while striving to defend the indefensible. And Thackeray's "explanation" that the ban was just to convey the public anger against not meeting the people's demand with regard to the Konkan Railway has failed to fool anyone As for the call to ban the book *Worshipping False Gods* by Arun Shourie, a move spearheaded by Congress personalities, several prominent political parties (including the Republican Party of India) have unequivocally opposed it with Chitta Basu of the Forward Bloc reminding the Congress of Jawaharlal Nehru's unambiguous opposition to such practices striking at the root of freedom of expression But that is not all What is most heartening is that 40 prominent Dalit thinkers of Maharashtra have decided to counter Shourie's arguments against Ambedkar by publishing and circulating Marathi articles translated into English instead of lending undue importance to the publication by imposing a ban on it as was deplorably done in the case of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* That is how it should be in a democracy Sanjoy Ghose's abduction and reported killing have come under sharp criticism both at home and abroad from even quarters which have never condoned the Indian state's occasional use of strong-arm methods to suppress opposition in the name of fighting 'anti-nationals' whether in J & K, Punjab or the North-East The ruling RJD's "bravado" in the wake of Laloo Yadav's arrest has further exposed the outfit's "faith" in democratic principles while bringing out its real character both in the State and the country at large

It needs to be emphasised that such expressions of intolerance have to be fought only through democratic means and not by adopting coercive measures that become counterproductive in the long run (as is the experience from the consequences of state terrorism in different parts of the country) It is highly reassuring that at least saner elements in the country have begun asserting themselves against these reprehensible moves Thus although attempts are underway to undermine the nation's democratic foundation by steps which, like book-burning, signify nothing but a throwback into the Dark Ages, these attempts do meet with stiff resistance from segments of our polity that are not inconsequential even today And herein lies the hope for the future This is the real silver lining as dark clouds hover over the Indian horizon on the eve of the golden jubilee of our independence

August 6 S C

Gandhi's Lonely Furrow

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

As the country is getting ready to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of attainment of freedom, many memories come back to those who were fortunate to be witness to those momentous events The subcontinent—both India and Pakistan winning independence—opened a new chapter in history, the chapter on decolonisation It is not often realised that it is the people of this subcontinent who started a historic movement which saw, country after country, becoming free from colonial bondage and asserting themselves as independent nations It is ironic but true that this great historic process ended in the fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of India and Pakistan while the end has now come with the end of the British colonial rule in the Chinese island of Hong Kong

For those of us who have seen with our own eyes the ushering in of the independence to this country, there will always remain a tinge of tragedy attached to it—namely, the searing partition of the country The ecstasy of freedom was accompanied in those memorable days with the agony of partition As we remember one, the other also comes back to mind The joy of freedom was shattered by the bitter desolution evoked by the partition

In the excitement of the golden jubilee celebrations, it is but natural that the aspect of joy, of triumph is remembered and highlighted, while that of sorrow, of defeat, is often forgotten or glossed over But at 50, a nation certainly reaches adulthood and can look back without anger or remorse on what happened and into the cause of this tragic development, namely, the vivisection of a country as a condition precedent to its independence It is time we assessed who was responsible and for how much this division of the country, this slicing up of the organic whole of a vibrant body politic

In this context, it is surprising to find that some of the principal actors on the Indian side could not anticipate the blood and tear that would follow the partition In their intellectual horizon, it was going to be a smooth, painless partition which would usher in freedom but without tears It is on record that both Sardar Vallabhai Patel and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru expected that it would just be a peaceful partition and everything would be all right once it was brought about Only Gandhiji had a different view He had the terrible premonition that the partition would lead to endless distress as it turned out to be This difference among the leaders of the triumphant national movement was known at that time to even the youngest of reporters It was known that Gandhiji was not happy, and he was not called to the meeting of the Congress Working Committee which accepted the Mountbatten Plan for the partitioning of the country

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D G TENDULKAR who did a great national service writing volumes after volumes on Gandhiji's very active life, has recorded an extraordinary piece out of Gandhiji's papers Two days before the Mountbatten Award was announced on June 3, 1947, Gandhiji who was in Delhi at the time woke up half an hour before his early morning prayer on June 1, 1947 and wrote down in his diary the following which is part of our history

> The purity of my striving will be put to the test only now Today, I find myself all alone Even the Sardar and Jawaharlal think that my reading of the political situation is wrong and peace is sure to return if partition is agreed upon They did not like my telling the Viceroy that even if there was to be partition, it should not be through British intervention or under the British rule They wonder, if I have not deteriorated with age
>
> Nevertheless, I must speak as I feel, if I am to prove a true, loyal friend to the Congress and to the British people, as I claim to be, regardless of whether my advice is appreciated or not I see clearly that we are setting about this business the wrong way We may not feel the full effect immediately, but I can see clearly that the future of independence gained at this price is going to be dark I pray, that God may not keep me alive to witness it In order that He may give me the strength and wisdom to remain firm in the midst of universal opposition and to utter the full truth, I need all the strength that purity can give
>
> But in spite of my being all alone in my thoughts, I am experiencing an ineffable inner joy and freshness of mind I feel as if God Himself is lighting my path before me And that is perhaps the reason why I am able to fight on single-handed The people ask me to retire to Kashi or to the Himalayas I laugh and tell them that the Himalayas of my penance are where there is misery to be alleviated, oppression to be relieved There can be no rest for me, so long as there is a single person in India lacking the necessaries of life I cannot bear to see Badshah Khan's grief His inner agony wrings my heart But, if I give way to tears, it would be

> cowardly and, the stalwart Pathan as he is, he would break down So I go about my business unmoved That is no small thing
>
> But maybe all of them are right and I alone am floundering in darkness I shall, perhaps, not be alive to witness it, but should the evil I apprehend overtake India and her independence can be imperilled, let posterity know what agony this old soul went through thinking of it Let it not be said that Gandhi was party to India's vivisection But everybody is today impatient for independence Therefore, there is no other help

Here is the clear proof that Gandhiji was not a party to the partition of India, while statesmen like Nehru and Patel were beguiled into accepting it, nurturing the illusion that once the partition was brought about, everything would be lovely in the garden Only Gandhi had the premonition that the partition would unleash forces which would be terrible for the two countries It is known that in the negotiations that preceded the partition, Gandhi went to the utmost length to avert it So much so that he at one stage proposed to hand over the Prime Ministership of India to Jinnah, an offer which was not approved by either Nehru or Patel This was the report that the young reporter like the present writer got at the time

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ACTUALLY Gandhiji's herculean efforts at averting the partition of India started long ago Even from prison, he welcomed Rajaji's formula in 1944 and immediately after his release, he had long and confidential parleys with Jinnah The collapse of that round of talks naturally came as a severe blow for many of us But the atmosphere at the time was not one of touch-and-go Hope was nurtured that something would sooner be found to escape the partition By the time Mountbatten started his final round of talks, it became inevitable that Gandhiji would not be able to avert the partition It is thus clear that only one among the stalwarts of our freedom movement, Gandhiji, had the foresight about the irreparable damage that the partition would bring to the subcontinent

All the other leaders regarded that the scar of the partition would be short-lived, though the British, as the imperial power still wielding their baton, wanted to make use of the partition for their Central Asian policy It may be noted that three years before the actual partition, Prof Coupland had drawn up a tentative map of the partitioning of India The idea behind that exercise was obviously to decontaminate the north-west from the rest of the subcontinent, and keep it as a reserve to use it as the jumping-off ground into Central Asia Sir Olaf Caroe who was one of the star players in the Great Game found that after the War, Britain was too weak to play it So, he took all his plans and papers for the Great Game to the US State Department and urged the USA, the new *avatar*, to take up the role which Britain had played for nearly a century This gives us the clue why the US Administration assigned for Pakistan a strategic role in the period of the Cold War

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WHY did the Congress leadership accept the partition? One gets the impression at the time that practically the entire lot of the Congress leaders had become tired, unwilling to undertake another round of struggle Secondly, they seemed to have been taken in by Mountbatten's persuasions and blandishments Gandhi saw through both But perhaps he had the misgiving that another round of mass struggle—bigger even than the 1942 movement—might not be possible in view of the fact that the Congress leadership itself did not seem to be prepared for it

This obvious reluctance of Gandhiji to undertake another round of struggle is one of the mysteries of Indian history in the modern age Gandhi was never known to shirk even when he was single-handed, as it happened in the twenties This time, he had on his side JP and the entire Left (including the thoroughly chastened Communists) Why then did he keep quiet, anticipating the harrowing consequence of the partition?

Sometimes History does not provide the right answer—even after 50 long years ■

(*By arrangement with* The Hindu)

Readers, please note....

The next issue of Mainstream *(August 16, 1997) will carry a number of articles by several noted personalities devoted to the golden jubilee of Indian independence with retrospective analyses—from various angles—of the path traversed since 1947*

In the following issue (dated August 23, 1997) Mainstream *will focus on the subject of children in the backdrop of the fiftieth anniversary of freedom The contributors will be writing on different dimensions of protection and development of children while highlighting the integrated approach*

—Editor

Nagaland Ceasefire and Isak Swu

HARISH CHANDOLA

A three-month ceasefire began in Nagaland on August 1 It is the second in the troubled history of that area, since armed fighting erupted in the then Naga Hills district of Assam in July 1956 The first, negotiated and arranged by Jaya Prakash Narayan, B P Chaliha, and Rev Michael Scott, had begun on September 6, 1964, and was officially brought to an end by the then Governor of Nagaland, B K Nehru, on September 1, 1972, eight years afterwards, without resolving the conflict

Nobody knows who negotiated this second ceasefire and the conditions it has been arranged with It is a secretive one this time All one knows is that it was arrived at abroad, nobody knows where exactly, and possibly signed with, if such a signing has been done, as in 1964, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) An NSCN handout, issued in Imphal, Manipur, hinted at that

Once again, the Government of India will engage the Naga militants in negotiations It will be, as in the negotiations of the sixties, fighting by other means The first rule of engaging in it will be to know the adversary In the coming talks with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN), its Chairman, Isak Chishi Swu, may not be an adversary, but there will certainly be a combat, of wits, between him and the leaders of the Government of India

Before engaging in it, it might be worthwhile knowing about him

Isak Swu is past his sixties. A very disciplined and hard life he has led for 40 years, since he left college in Shillong in the mid-fifties, has not allowed him to put on weight

He was a good football player and a sportsman in college Even later, after he joined the Naga fighters and went underground, I used to see him playing football with young volunteers, on small hill patches in their forest hideouts in Nagaland

He is a very serious, determined and principled person, and not a man of many words When he says something, he means it Trickery is not in his character

I remember the opening of the first peace talks in Chedema, after the ceasefire, over three decades ago The leader of the Government of India delegation to these talks, its Foreign Secretary, Y D Gundevia, who was a bit of a boy scout in his behaviour, used to badger Isak Swu who, because of his fluent English, spoke on behalf of the Naga delegation, with just one question "Isak," he would ask, "what do you mean by independence, when you say the Nagas are independent, and have come to the talks to get the Government of India recognise that fact?"

Gundevia kept on asking the meaning of "independence" of Swu, during the official talks, at lunch-breaks, and at evening teas, day after day, week after week and in fact month after month Isak used to ignore the question

Then, one day, he could not When Gundevia raised it again, Isak asked him "You are independent, are you not?"

"Yes, of course, we are," answered Gundevia, very promptly

"Then, I hope, you know the meaning of the word, independent," Swu said

After that Gundevia never repeated it The meaning of the word independence could not be one for Gundevia and another for Swu

Swu is a teetotaller and a man of very simple habits

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Some years after the ceasefire was shattered and brought to an end by the Governor, I met some former Pakistani Army officers, who being Bengali, had joined the Bangladesh Army In East Pakistan, they were responsible for providing assistance to the Naga fighters, when they would come there, to obtain arms and ammunition

They used to be housed on the outskirts of Dacca and described as timber merchants from the Chittagong Hill Tracts, a tribal area, to avoid detection by Indian intelligence agencies Piles of logs would be placed outside the houses and camps they were lodged in, to authenticate that description, and they were warned not to run around and run the risk of being spotted by Indian agents

But some young boys of Nagaland could just not be restrained After years of privation, hiding and fighting in jungles, they would come to that big city, of bright lights and many attractions They wanted to visit its bazaars and roam in them, looking for items of clothing they would like, and other needs And they went to cinemas, which were also frequented by members of the Indian diplomatic community and other Indian organisations And sometimes they would visit drinking places Some wore long hair, the Mizos

(Continued on page 38)

ASEAN CURRENCY CRISIS

Lessons for India

C.P CHANDRASEKHAR and JAYATI GHOSH

When the ASEAN Ministers met late July for an annual review of developments in the region, their economic confidence was at a historic low Some among the principal countries of the grouping (namely, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia) have become used to being held up as model developers in terms of both policy and performance for the past decade or more They are now faced with the real possibility that their success was built on a fragile economic base, and may not be sustained very much into the future

This point had been driven home by the turmoil in currency markets in the region In May this year, uncertainty created by persisting current account deficits in Thailand, that had risen to around eight per cent of GDP in 1996, set off a speculative run on the Thai baht. To the surprise of the currency speculators, not only did the Thai Government and Central Bank respond with a strong defence of the currency by buying baht with dollars from Thailand's large foreign exchange surpluses, but they were joined in this effort by central banks of the other ASEAN countries In the event, a number of speculators who were foiled and left with losses retreated licking their wounds

But even then, it was clear that this victory could only be temporary, given Thailand's adverse economic fundamentals which were reflected in a high current account deficit, slowing exports, huge stocks of short-term external debt and an ailing financial sector Barely two months later the government itself decided to accept partial defeat when it put the baht on "float", a euphemism for letting it depreciate without interventionist support from the Central Bank. The trigger this provided to speculation not only resulted in a 20 per cent depreciation of the baht, but it also put pressure on the other ASEAN currencies like the Philippine peso, Malaysian ringgit and the Indonesian rupiah which have all depreciated to varying degrees This domino effect is not just because these countries are part of a grouping It reflects the fact that even though they are not yet in the mess Thailand finds itself in, speculators believe that their pursuit of an economic strategy similar to that of Thailand puts them on a trajectory where a crisis of similar nature is in the making

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THIS may appear very surprising One of the remarkable developments in post-War capitalism has been the recent economic success of some South-East Asian economies like Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia These countries were unlike the early "miracle" countries like Japan or even South Korea and Taiwan The latter, while using their position as the bulwark against communism in that region to access international liquidity, pursued "nationalist" economic strategies involving close collaboration between the state and domestic private capital The second-tier South-East Asian industrialisers, on the other hand, operated with relatively open economic regimes and depended heavily on the inflow of foreign direct investment for their industrialisation process Often this investment used the domestic economy as the base for production for the international market, ensuring in the process that the foreign exchange costs of foreign investment were recovered by the exports of the foreign firms themselves

This experience lent support to the view that, contrary to perceptions in the Left, integration with world capitalism in its imperialist phase did not constitute a constraint on the industrialisation of the developing countries Even if this were correct during the first half of the twentieth century and the immediate years after the Second World War, it was held, it was of little relevance during the years of globalisation when mobile international capital was ensuring the proliferation of capitalist industry across the globe, reducing the economic distance between nations So long as countries pursued an open economic regime with policies aimed at rendering the domestic economic environment conducive to foreign capital, sustained capitalist industralisation was seen as inevitable, with beneficial "trickle down" effects for the rest of the population This argument has been especially forcefully made in the Indian context, where the example of these countries' economic strategies is constantly used to suggest that more liberal markets and more explicit reliance upon inward movements of foreign direct investment for export production, constitute the key to potential economic success in this country as well

It is now increasingly clear, however, that there were at least two flawed premises underlying this argument First, there was the premise that globalisation principally involved the cross-border flow of productive capital as opposed to financial capital, such that it involved the creation of capacities aimed at production for the world market Second, there was the perception that the flow of productive capital had occurred to such an extent that the possibilities for foreign investment-led industrialisation were now substantial across the globe

To start with the second of these premises, the evidence on the quantum and spread of direct foreign investment is telling Given the large number of developing countries in the world system and the *relatively* small absolute flow of foreign direct investment to developing countries, not all countries can, in the foreseeable future, emerge as significant sites for such investment either in terms of quantum or relative to domestic capital formation and GDP If the total of such flows to all developing countries in 1994 were divided equally among them, each country would have received around $500 million, which would be considered grossly inadequate by a country like China, which attracts more than $35 billion a year, and even a country like India, which targets an inflow of $10 billion annually Given the extreme 'inequality' of distribution of FDI at present, even allowing for a continuous increase in global FDI flows, most developing countries are unlikely to benefit very much from these flows

Further, globalisation thus has pre-eminently been a process of globalisation of finance rather than of production Many countries in Asia have been part of the boom in the "emerging markets" that became evident in the early 1990s in the wake of financial sector reform and lower returns in developed country markets These have included the until-recently successful industrialisers in South-East Asia as well as less successful ones like India, which have all attracted fairly large flows of financial capital Flows of "portolio capital" and short-term foreign debt have burgeoned because of developments in the international financial sphere As a result, many countries opting for liberalisation are attracting large volumes of foreign portfolio investment, which is not being undertaken with the intent of acquiring a "lasting", or even control-wise significant, interest in the firms concerned Portfolio flows to developing countries in the form of investments in bonds, equities, certificates of deposit and commercial paper, rose from an annual average of $1 3 billion during 1983-90 to $22 9 billion during 1991-93 and $46 9 billion in 1993 Even though uncertainties of various kind saw a decline to $34 9 billion in 1994, the magnitude remains large for some countries

This virtual financial explosion in developing country markets is largely explained by the factors encouraging financial capital to move out of the developed countries First, debt overhang and slow growth in the developed countries has affected financial interests adversely That makes risk-discounted returns in the developing countries much better than in the developed Second, privatisation programmes have put up for sale resources f substantial value that can be acquired relatively cheap in a context of currency depreciation Third, these are markets in which the pent up demand for credit is substantial and innovative financial instruments have not been experimented with in the past And finally, real interest rates and therefore financial sector returns tend to be relatively high in developing countries undertaking adjustment programmes involving monetary stringency

Given these motivations, flows or purely "financial capital" tend to be speculative, responding adversely to any instability either of the real economy or financial variables like the rate of inflation and the exchange rate On the other hand, these flows themselves exert a considerable influence on exchange rates and financial asset prices An "excessive" inflow of portfolio capital to any developing country tends to "shore up" its foreign exchange reserves and keep the exchange rate of currency buoyant, independent of development on the current account

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TENDENCIES like this have been underway in Thailand for sometime now While deterioration in export performance resulting in part from external developments and in part from the loss of the initial advantages it had as a location for world market oriented production had diminished foreign exchange earnings, imports remained high under its liberal trade regime The consequent deterioration in

Thailand's current account deficit did not immediately matter because of the large inflows it garnered on the capital account But contrary to common perception, these flows were not dominantly of productive capital targeting Thailand as an export platform, but financial flows in the form of portfolio investments and debt Such flows not only financed the country's current account deficit, but explained its ostensible "comfortable" foreign exchange surpluses of almost $38 billion at the end of April

It was clear even then that Thailand was sitting on a fragile bubble, which must burst And burst it did, with ripples in the rest of ASEAN as well Governments have responded by attacking the maverick "speculators" and foreign robber barons who were ostensibly destabilising these economies But the fact of the matter is that the easy pursuit of the capitalist dream based on open economies and foreign funds has been shown up for the mirage it was Unfortunately, such strategies are hardly pursued with national interest in mind Not surprisingly, even when South-East Asia battles to defend depreciating currencies, India, with its deteriorating export performance and slowing growth, is seeing a strengthening of the rupee because of large foreign portfolio capital inflows In order to prevent any excessive appreciation of the rupee, which would render India's exports more expensive and imports cheaper in dollar terms, the Reserve Bank of India has been forced to step in to buy dollars and strengthen that currency against the rupee As a result India's foreign exchange reserves have reached record levels

This paradoxical situation of a deteriorating export performance and current account deficit on the one hand and a strong rupee on the other in the current environment of globalised finance, should naturally have called for caution with regard to financial liberalisation However, the government, in its desperation to please international finance, with motivations which are not too transparent, is using the rise in foreign reserves as 'proof' of the "success of reform" In the past, the votaries of liberalisation have constantly referred to the South-East Asian economies as "models" to emulate Their unwillingness to imbibe the lessons that their present crisis provide, points to the real nature of their supposedly "technocratic" economic prescriptions ■

UTTARAKHAND MOVEMENT

Areas of Peripheral Support

PRADEEP KUMAR

The author is a Reader, Department of Political Science, Panjab University, Chandigarh The following article is being published on the occasion of the third anniversary of the launching of the movement for the separate State of Uttarakhand in August 1994

No movement in contemporary Indian politics has been able to muster so much popular support, that too in such a short time-span, as the movement for a separate hill State of Uttarakhand in Uttar Pradesh Unlike in other regions where similar demands for separate States have come up, the movement in the UP hills has been far more extensive in the sense that it has evoked least opposition, both from outside the region as well as from within it

While the former Chief Minister, Mulayam Singh Yadav, in whose reign the infamous Muzzafarnagar incident (of rape and firing on the Uttarakhandi agitators) took place in October 1994, has been identified as the villain in the popular perception, most political parties, ironically including his own Samajwadi Party, have lent support to the demand for a separate hill State It may be recalled that the four successive governments led by the BJP (1991-92), the Samajwadi Party (1993-95), the Bahujan Samaj Party (1995), and once again the Bahujan Samaj Party (1997), have passed *suo moto* resolutions in the UP Vidhan Sabha urging upon the Central Government to create a separate State of Uttarakhand (Uttaranchal[1] in the BJP's resolution) So much so that even the United Front Government of the 13-party conglomeration, supported by the Congress party from outside, favoured the demand openly when its leader, the former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda, announced his government's intention to create a new State from the ramparts of the Red Fort on Independence Day last year

This near-national consensus is a rare thing in view of the fate of many such movements elsewhere, some of which have travelled a longer course of agitation The cases of Vidarbha in Maharashtra, Telengana in Andhra Pradesh, Gorkhaland in West Bengal, of Jharkhand in Bihar, are only a few instances where such a consensus is totally lacking Most of these have either been opposed outrightly or have been diluted to promising "Regional Councils" or "District Councils" or even "Development Boards", etc. Laloo Prasad Yadav's open hostility against the creation of Jharkhand State is most clearly reflected in his one-time statement that the State could be created only on his dead body That he has subsequently undergone a somersault in his own interest to ensure the survival of his government is a different matter

While there could be several reasons[2] accounting for this "national consensus" in favour of a UP hill State, one major favourable factor seems to be the near-unanimity that one comes across in the region itself The movement for a separate State, apart from massifying itself in the last three years, has been successful in eliciting support of almost all sections and (sub-) regions of Uttarakhand One may recall here that lack of such a support from within the State has often delayed the national consensus in such matters In bilingual Bombay, the bifurcation of the State into Maharashtra and Gujarat was deferred in the mid-fifties partly because the Gujarati businessmen were not ready to lose their financial capital (Bombay City) to Maharashtra, in undivided Punjab, the lack of support for the Punjabi Suba came from within a large number of Punjabi speaking populace who, for various reasons, declared Hindi (against Punjabi) as their mother-tongue to undermine the *rationale* of a linguistic State, which gave a handle to the Centre to postpone the reorganisation for as long as it could

In the contemporary scenario, the non-tribals, particularly the Marwaris, the Nepalese, the Sindhis, the Punjabis, the UP contractors, the Bengali bureaucrats, etc , have adopted quite a hostile attitude to the Jharkhand demand Even the non-tribals settled in Jharkhand region for over a thousand years now, namely, the "Sadan" communities, most of whom are landless labourers, have lent their support to the Jharkhand movement somewhat reluctantly In Gorkhaland, the non-Gorkhas, particularly the Bengalis, the Lepchas, and other "non-Nepalese" are quite hostile to the demand of the Gorkhas The Telengana demand is outrightly against the settlers from the coastal "Sirkar" region of Andhra, most of whom are landlords and professionals in the Telengana region, which has led many Velamas and Kammas to oppose the movement

These are only some representative cases to show that politically it is very important for a movement to first muster sufficient and unanimous support from within the region This includes both, the support of all sections and communities, and the support from all "sub-regions" that may constitute the bigger region In a way this also means that a region looking for its own identity, may also have to strive for the fusion of various yet smaller identities, before it can "speak" on their behalf Once these smaller identities level the same charges against the regional elite as the latter itself has been levelling against the parent State, the battle is half lost, not only on the moral front but also on the political front

II

WHILE broadly the Uttarakhand movement has succeeded in mobilising support from all regions/sub-regions of the UP hills, and also from among all sections of its hill population, there may be some variation with regard to the intensity or quality of this support, if one takes into consideration the various historical and cultural sub-regions of these hilly tracts A brief account of the socio-cultural and historical make-up of Uttarakhand will not be out of place here

The entire Uttarakhand region can be safely divided into two broad sub-regions, Garhwal (comprising Dehradun, Tehri, Pauri, Chamoli and Uttarkashi districts) and Kumaon (consisting of Pithoragarh, Almorah, Nainital and Udham Singh Nagar districts) While Kumaon itself can be subdivided into the hill districts and the Terai region (namely Udham Singh district), Garhwal has been historically far more *complex a region* The major division in the Garhwal hills is between British Garhwal and Princely Garhwal The former was in fact usurped by the colonial power after the British soldiers lent support to the Garhwal King during the course of the Gorkha invasion in early nineteenth century, resulting in the Signauli Treaty (1914) which transferred Pauri Garhwal to British India Princely Garhwal was left with only the Tehri Garhwal region which consequently made the King shift his capital from Shrinagar (which was now in British territory) to Tehri It was much later in 1960 that Tehri and Pauri were reorganised to carve out Uttarkashi and Chamoli districts respectively While British Garhwal became a part of UP nearly 150 years ago, the Princely State of Tehri Garhwal was merged with UP only as late as 1949 after a successful Praja Mandal movement in the princely areas

British Garhwal had yet another region, Dehradun district, a part of which was acquired by the colonial power after the battle of Nalapani, which made the original owner of the Jaunsar Bawar region, namely, the Maharani of the Sirmaur Kingdom of the neighbouring Himachal area, mortgage this area to the British in lieu of the monetary borrowings by the Sirmaur kingdom Subsequently when the people of Jaunsar Bawar favoured the British administration against the misrule of the parent Indian Princely State, the British were more than willing to permanently merge this area with the Dehradun district in 1828

Today Jaunsar Bawar (Tehsil Chakrata) is a distinct sub-region of Garhwal—both in historical and cultural terms The region is bound by river Tons on the west and river Yamuna on the east Barring one small *khas* of Deogarh in the Teoni development block, which is west of river Tons, the entire region is bound by these two rivers which make a confluence (*sangam*) at Dak Pathar While Jaunsar has Kalsi and Chakrata as its main towns, the Bawar region (named after river Pawar which merges with Tons near Teoni) is very small and has only one small town of Teoni The entire region forms the Chakrata tehsil of district Dehradun Jaunsar Bawar has been historically and culturally close to the neighbouring districts of Himachal Pradesh

Apart from the historical distinctness of the region, it is anthropologically different from the rest of the Garhwal hills of which it is formally a part today The area is largely inhabited by the Jaunsari tribals who have been accorded the status of Scheduled Tribes and enjoy a reservation of two per cent in government jobs Interestingly, nearly all original inhabitants of this region are listed as Scheduled Tribes, which includes such high sounding "upper caste" surnames as Chauhan, Sharma, Joshi, etc, only the Vaishiya community is missing as the tribals did not originally have traders amongst themselves The two per cent reservation for a little over one lakh Jaunsaris (besides some tribals like Tharus, Buksas, Rajis in the Terai) is a sizeable chunk This has made most tribals quite satisfied with the present arrangement

The Doon valley itself is somewhat different from the rest of the Garhwal region It, being the largest town of the entire Uttarakhand, has been the centre of education A very large number of institutions of national and international importance are headquartered in this valley Even though it has been the nerve-centre of the Uttarakhand movement, its demographic character is somewhat different from the other districts of Uttarakhand It has a sizeable population of non-*Paharis* many of whom are engaged in business and commercial activity These include the "refugees" from the West Punjab as well as some "retirees" from the plains who have settled in the valley after serving in other parts of the country Unlike the other hill districts, the valley has also attracted many people from the plains in the wake of its large size and employment opportunities

Unlike Garhwal, the Kumaon region, as mentioned before, has only two sub-regions, the hills and the Terai belt comprising the newly carved out district of Udham Singh Nagar The Terai has a large settlement of Punjabi Sikh farmers, apart from the Bukas, Tharus, etc, who constitute the Scheduled Tribes[3] The towns of Kashipur, Khatima, Jaspur, Kichha and Rudrapur in this district are close to Haldwani in Nainital district, and put together these constitute the industrial belt of the Kumaon division

III

This somewhat longish description of sub-regions of Uttarakhand is aimed at analysing the support for the movement in terms of sub-regional variation It has been the endeavour of this researcher to understand the shifts in support of this demand While overall the Kumaon region was somewhat "lukewarm" in comparison to Garhwal in its enthusiasm for a separate State, the variation within Garhwal region was much sharper

As has been argued elsewhere,[4] the variation from Kumaon to Garhwal could be attributed to several reasons, some of which may be listed as a) the uneven levels of development—Kumaon being far ahead of Garhwal in various socio-economic indicators, b) Garhwal's history being that of a princely State where people fought against the brutalities of the Maharajah on a much larger scale than perhaps was required in British Kumaon where at least some civil rights did exist in the pre-independence period, c) the recent incidents of firing and rape at Muzaffarnagar (October 2, 1994) largely affected the Garhwalis who were the main victims, and gave a new turn to the movement, d)

Garhwal has had a long tradition of revolutionaries which, among others, included Sri Dev Suman (who died fighting the Tehri Maharajah's misrule) and Chandra Singh Garhwali (of Peshawar firing incident) in whose memory the capital of the proposed State of Uttarakhand is to be named as Chandra Nagar at Garsain

The movement in Kumaon is therefore much less visible than in Garhwal However, the Terai belt of Kumaon, which as discussed before is somewhat demographically different from the hill districts, is still much less involved in building up the tempo for a separate State This is not to deny that the infamous Khatima firing incident which, alongwith the Mussoorie and Muzaffarnagar incidents, ignited the fire, took place in this belt only In short, the intensity of support gets further diluted in the Terai region compared to the rest of the Kumaon hills where people already find themselves somewhat lined up behind the Garhwalis who have given them a lead Ironically it was in Kumaon that the only regional party of the hills, Uttarakhand Kranti Dal (UKD), was established in the late 1970s It is a different matter that the Dal could never become a force to be reckoned with, and is in a shambles today The variation in terms of the intensity of the emotional support, and mass character of the movement, is far more discernible in the Dehradun valley and the Jaunsar Bawar area of this district, than it is elsewhere As mentioned before, the valley is home to a large number of non-*Paharis* who almost equal the *Paharis* in numerical strength Most of these have, however, settled in the valley for a long time and to a great extent identify themselves with the political aspirations of the region They are likely to benefit as much from the creation of a hill State as the local *Paharis* It is this pragmatic realisation that has made many of them support the movement, both in physical as well as financial terms The latter is crucial and the business community finds it convenient to extend this in view of their long-term interests in the proposed State While the support of this group is very much there for everyone to see, and whereas many of these have joined the BJP which in turn has somewhat appropriated the movement[5] in the region, the intensity of this support is more visible than real

Many of these non-*Paharis* have in fact simply played safe by siding with the strong current which threatened to sweep them away Any resistance to this current would have invited the wrath of the fellow Garhwalis who are more than given to the movement In fact much of the support of these non-Garhwalis is for a smaller State which would be more manageable, than for a purely hill State This is why some of them wanted the neighbouring Bijnor, Saharanpur and Hardwar districts to be merged with the proposed Uttarakhand State These are districts from the adjacent plains with which the valley has strong business links

Some non-Garhwalis had even gone to the extent of launching a *Maidani Manch* but it was largely confined more to protect the interests of the non-Garhwalis than to attack the demand frontally Similarly the *Shivalik Group* wanted to exclude the valley from the proposed State Needless to say, these groups confined their activities to pamphlets and hand-bills only, and were subsequently marginalised completely Much of the *rationale* of these groups was a fear psychosis created by the mistakes of omissions and commissions by the leaders of the Uttarakhand movement, that the non-Garhwalis would have no place in the proposed State It was only when these fears were removed and cooperation of these groups sought by the activists, that the demand became massive in the Doon valley

The participation of the non-Garhwalis in the leadership positions, however, is still very little Most activists conceded that the movement's leadership did not put in enough efforts to coopt the non- *Paharis* beyond making them somewhat passive and reluctant supporters of the movement All said and done, it goes to the credit of the movement that no significant section of these "settlers" is today formally "hostile" to the proposed State At worst, they are "lukewarm" to the idea of Uttarakhand

One point on which even the Garhwalis of the Doon valley raise a dissenting voice, is the choice of Chandra Nagar (Garsain) as the new capital of the proposed State While in the rest of Garhwal and Kumaon there was near unanimity on this issue, most activists in the Dehradun valley positively disliked this idea and dubbed this choice as being emotional and hence impracticable They maintained that in that case Lucknow was closer to them as it was an overnight journey by train, compared to Garsain which was poorly connected by roads taking two days by bus Moreover, the town of Garsain was not suited because of its topography It was high on the mountains and lacked all required infrastructure to support the population of a State capital The floods during the rainy season, they feared, might block the access to the town altogether for days Creating the infrastructure for a capital city there would be not only financially straining but was likely to result in greater pollution of the hills Consequently most activists and intellectuals of the valley preferred either Dehradun itself or some other town adjacent to the plains (such as Kalagarh in Pauri) to be the new capital of Uttarakhand

IV

If there is one area where the movement is actually dormant (or even nearly absent), it is the Jaunsar Bawar region of Garhwal As described earlier, this is largely the tribal belt, and borders with Himachal Pradesh Throughout the UP hills, it is perhaps the only region where one hardly comes across any "activists" who ever participated in the movement for a separate State In fact more often than not, the information that one gathers is about the *absence* of the movement All respondents, without exception, which included journalists, political leaders, businessmen and some intellectuals too, more than clearly were of the view that this was one area where the movement remained at the most lukewarm There was hardly any initiative, and it was only when the agitationists from the neighbouring districts of Uttarkashi and Tehri came, that some of the local inhabitants also joined in raising slogans in favour of a separate State

While the local MLA, Munna Singh Chauhan, had to formally sympathise with the demand in view of his Samajwadi Party's officially taken stand, his followers and sympathisers were more than explicit about the fact that Uttarakhand was not on their agenda All that they conceded was that despite their reluctance bordering on opposition, they had never formally protested against the demand for the creation of a separate hill State in UP

While initially it was somewhat puzzling to know why this small sub-region of Uttarakhand was so cold over this issue, the demography and the socio-economic composition of the region made it abundantly clear The region has a strong concentration of Jaunsaris who are a Scheduled Tribe and have therefore enjoyed two per cent reservation in government jobs As argued in the beginning of this paper, for a small population of a little more than one lakh, this two per cent of the total population of the State is quite a big percentage This is more so when the other tribals, namely, the Tharus, the Buksas, the Bhotias, etc who inhabit the Terai region (that includes the districts of Pilibhit, Kheri, besides Udham Singh Nagar) are extremely poor and socially too backward to benefit from the reservation[6] Obviously no sentiment for a separate State is enough to make them commit the mistake of getting their share reduced by way of confining it to the eight or nine districts of the proposed hill State, which in any case may have very little to offer by way of employment opportunities compared to the fertile lands of the Gangetic plains of Uttar Pradesh On the contrary, if this region remains in UP even after the carving out of the hill State, it may get special attention as the only hill region with the forest and mineral wealth

Apart from being a tribal area, Jaunsar Bawar is also quite isolated from the rest of the Garhwal region in terms of its culture and psyche While the Garhwalis are seen as a "martial race" who fought the Gorkhas, the British and also the Maharajah of Tehri, the Jaunsaris were in fact "mortgaged" by their erstwhile Maharani of Sirmour princely State to the British Government in wake of the latter's monetary and military help rendered in combating the Gorkha invasion in the early nineteenth century (1803-15) The cultural isolation has only added to the tribal identity which is largely constructed by the economics of the situation

The near absence of higher education facilities in the region has also deprived its people of the political consciousness which goes with the institutions of higher learning In the entire region of Jaunsar Bawar, there is not even a single degree college, and one has to be enterprising enough to travel all the way to Dehradun to get higher education Most tribals have to remain content with the secondary school education[7] It is more than evident from the cases of Garhwal, Kumaon, Assam and Mizoram, etc, that strong regional sentiments for political autonomy almost coincide with the opening up of the institutions of higher learning The setting up of universities in Garhwal (Srinagar) and Kumaon (Nainital) in the seventies created a new set of politically conscious and educationally confident young people who turned strong votaries of Uttarakhand once their "pride" and self-respect were hurt[8] during the course of the agitation against reservations in August-October 1994

Much of the momentum that the movement acquired after these incidents was in fact a culmination of the process of identity formation in the Garhwal-Kumaon region which was taking place over the years While most areas of these two regions succeeded in fusing their smaller local identities into a common Uttarakhandi identity, Jaunsar Bawar's case remained an exception The lack of development, the absence of cultural and historical links with Garhwal, reservations for local tribes and closeness to neighbouring Himachal Pradesh, were some factors that led to the growing subjective perception of a distinct Jaunsari sub-identity The latter has become powerful enough to dissuade the people from merging themselves into Uttarakhandi or Garhwali identities

Even the Garhwalis have contributed to this in a way by not identifying their own aspirations with this region This was one reason that the neighbouring Uttarkashi district which was on the forefront of the agitation, failed to elicit the support of the Jaunsaris There were hardly any attempts to involve the tribal leadership by allaying their apprehensions about their fate in the new State Only on a few occasions some rallyists from the neighbouring Tehri and Uttarkashi districts came to muster the Jaunsaris' support

The situation was somewhat better in those areas which were physically adjacent to the Garhwal districts, such as Lakhamandal, where the sentiment for a separate State was much stronger This may also have something to do with the fact that most tribals who have benefited from the reservations are confined to the Chakarata, Teoni and Kalsi areas, leaving little share for those on the periphery of the region

Jaunsar Bawar's indifference bordering on alienation from the movement could partly be attributed to its geographical isolation from the Uttarakhand mountains The sheer physical distance, as much as the cultural or social distinctness, maybe the reason for most Jaunsaris opposing the choice of Garsain being the capital of the proposed State Most of the respondents insisted that the choice was illogical as it would create greater hurdles for them, Lucknow being closer to the region in terms of its overnight distance by train from Dehradun Interestingly the Jaunsaris were not the only ones to mention this, even the Doon Valley activists as mentioned before, and some inhabitants of the Garhwal towns bordering Jaunsar[9] maintained that Garsain was not fit to be the capital in view of its being physically distant from the region Garsain is located in the Pindor valley and is bereft of any infrastructure worth the name As against this, Dehradun or Kalagarh were mentioned as a better choice in the wake of these being already developed

V

THE agitationists for a separate State of Uttarakhand must ponder over such areas and their problems Any alienation of these may create political problems in due course of time, first by fracturing the "consensus" in favour of a State, and then by constantly undermining the moral and ethical bases of the demand itself The silver-lining, however, is that there is hardly any serious opposition to the demand, even though most Jaunsaris are reluctant about it This we have seen earlier, is also the case with some non-*Pahari* Uttarakhandis settled in the Doon valley as well

The creation of a separate State may not be on the agenda of these communities but these are likely to get benefited by way of better administration that is expected once a smaller State is carved out Some new districts, tehsils and development blocks are likely to be created which would give a fillip to development activities Today one takes over eight hours to travel from one part of Dehradun district to another Is it not reason enough for the people here to support a new State?

The variation in support of a separate State discussed in these pages is but natural in any region No regional identity, however strong, can ever be homogeneous enough to rule out such "dissenting" communities In fact it goes to the credit of the spontaneous and popular character of the movement that its "non-political" character (in the popular sense of the word) has made it possible to rise above the machinations of electoral politics The irony of the situation has been that on most occasions the political parties have only followed the movement rather than it being the other way around As a consequence of this, the support of most political parties, including that of the BJP, has come only by way of an electoral compulsion, which in any democratic set-up should be a logical thing to have happened

This "mass" character of the movement has to a large extent saved it from the "divisive" tendencies that one normally associates with conventional politics It is this spontaneity that is the strength of the movement It is this which made it possible for all parties to lend their explicit support, and it is again this that has created tremendous support from all sections of the population While this support has varied from region to region, and even from community to community, none has frontally opposed the movement Even the non-*Pahari* Uttarakhandis like the settlers from plains in the Terai and Doon valley and the lower castes like the Shilpkars[10] have not attacked the movement The least enthusiasm has been shown from the Jaunsar Bawar region but even here the tribals despite their reservations on several accounts, have gone with their neighbouring Garhwalis on this issue, and have succumbed to their political aspirations

This is no mean an achievement when compared with many other regions in India where the opposition to the demand for separate Statehood has come from within a dominant section of the indigenous population This has not only undermined the moral and political bases of these demands but has also given a handle to the Central leadership to procrastinate However, the leadership of the Uttarakhand movement must not allow the drifting of those who have "allowed" themselves to be associated with the movement for some pragmatic reasons, even though without being much emotional and enthusiastic about it If not tackled sensitively, these regions and communities may prove to be the Achills' heel of the Uttarakhand agitation ■

(This paper is based on the author's study tour of the various regions of Uttarakhand, conducted over a period of time between March 1996 and May 1997 It has been the endeavour of the author to interview as many activitists as possible, many of whom were journalists, students, professionals, housewives and intellectuals These were activists who led the movement in the last three years and became 'leaders' in their own right Needless to say, but for their valuable help this article would not have been written)

ENDNOTES

1 There is much resentment in Uttarakhand over the BJP's attempt to give its own name "Uttaranchal" to the proposed State Many activists of the movement insist that the party has shown "arrogance" in the matter, and has actually undermined our "self-respect" by supporting the demand only on its own terms The term "Uttarakhand" is quite ancient and has been used for this region from times immemorial The BJP, however, maintains that the two terms refer to the same region but the preference for Uttaranchal is on account of this term being more specific Uttarakhand was in fact the name of the division comprising the three border districts of Pithoragarh, Uttarkashi and Chamoli, that was created by the UP Government in 1960 but was wound up subsequently in 1968 Besides confusing the proposed State with this erstwhile division, the term also could confuse the region with the demand in West Bengal for a hill State in northern region, which was also termed as Uttarakhand at one time

2 Paul R Brass maintains that the Central Government followed an informal rule while acceding to the demands of linguistic States in the fifties and sixties This included conditions, namely the demand should not be secessionist, there should be no communal dimension of the regional assertion, the demand should be articulated at the popular level, and finally, no section of that region's population should be hostile to the demand This is based on a reading of Paul R Brass's *The Politics of India since Independence* (Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp 149-151)

I have further elaborated this point in my article, "Demand for Uttarakhand Wider Dimensions", *Mainstream*, August 19, 1995

3 There are only a few Scheduled Tribes in Uttar Pradesh These are, namely, Bhotias, Buksas, Jaunsaris, Rajis, and the Tharus Most of these are concentrated in the districts of Dehradun, Udham Singh Nagar, Pilibhit, Kheri and Sonabhadra

4 See my articles, "Uttarakhand Missing the Bus", *Frontline*, June 28, 1996, and also "Uttarakhand The Post-Election Scenario", *Mainstream*, January 11, 1997

5 In the last Assembly elections, held in October 1996, the BJP managed to secure 17 out of 19 seats from the hill region This made many talk about the movement being "appropriated" by the BJP It was, however, not entirely true I have argued this point separately, in "Uttarakhand The Post-Election Scenario", *Mainstream*, January 11, 1997

6 While the Jaunsaris are quite backward in terms of literacy rate, the Tharus and the Buksas of the Terai region are far more illiterate and have hardly any political identity to enable themselves to make use of these benefits

7 Today, there are seven intermediate colleges, ten high schools and over 265 primary schools Besides this, a voluntary agency "Samta" is also engaged in the literacy mission Despite these "feeder" colleges, there is not even a single degree college in the Jaunsar Bawar region Even the Navodaya Vidyalaya has not been opened in the region till this date Source K R Joshi *Jaunsar Bawar Ek Sankshipta Parichaya* [Society for Motivational Training and Action (SAMTA), Dehradun, 1995], p 21

8 Apart from the perception of relative socio-economic deprivation, it is the feeling of "hurt" of "self-respect", "autmagauravani" or such psychic phenomena which, more than anything else, "alienate" a region and its people from the dominant political culture While the economic factor may be a necessary condition, it is not the sufficient condition to arouse regional assertions See for details my article "Indian Federalism Issues and Challenges in the context of Demand for new States", in Kousar J Azam's forthcoming book

9 These included towns like Barkot, and small hamlets like Navgaon, Burney Gaad, etc in district Uttarkashi

10 The *Shilpkars* were earlier known as "*doms*" in Kumaon These were actually the "Harijans", and were different from the *doms* of the UP plains who were traditionally engaged in burning of the dead bodies at cremation grounds The name *Shilpkars* was given to them by the Arya Samaj leader, Lala Lajpat Rai, during one of his visits to the Kumaon hills in the pre-independence days Subsequently they were entered as such in the census reports in 1921 and 1931 See Shiv Prasad Dabral "Charan", *Uttarakhand Ka Itihas Part 8* (Dogadda, Virgatha Prakashan, New Delhi p 392)

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The Mohajirs and a Case for India

TURKKAYA ATAOV

I was one of the few international observers at the national elections in Pakistan (February 3, 1997) Representing the Vienna-based and UN-affiliated International Progress Organisation (IPO), together with Professor Hans Koechler, we differed from the other observers such as the former Australian Prime Minister, Malcolm Fraser, the head of the Commonwealth Observer Group, who termed them as "free and fair" We have been targets of enough complaints to be able to say that there was a bias of the authorities against one electoral group, the MQM (Mohjir Qoumi Movement) We found a persistent pattern of infringement upon the rights of one of the contending parties, the MQM

We could not enter, even with international observer credentials, certain sections in Karachi described as "No-Go-Areas" for the MQM I was a target of initially eggs, potatoes, tomatoes, bricks and finally gunfire at Landhi No 4 area while accompanying an MQM motorcade headed by the veteran senator, Ishtiaq Azhar, a day before the balloting The so-called "Haqiqi" men opened fire on the caravan to terrorise the participants While some MQM members and a BCC correspondent sustained injuries, the vehicles were partly smashed and firing created panic in the locality There were indications that the attackers had police backing Since there was no access to every area for independent observers like us, we wondered how the MQM voters could go there

The other observer groups having been stationed primarily is Islamabad, and close to the official circles, mainly complaints had to be addressed to us, our time spent in Karachi, where irregularities, even violent interference in the electoral procedures, were expected We visited many polling stations There was delayed voting in various areas, for instance, at Station No 110 where none could pluck up courage to vote till afternoon Some electoral lists were changed without explanation, and groups of people from Malir told us that they were denied the right to vote In Station No 95 at Korangi, a member of the rival faction, armed with a pistol, was stamping votes Two MQM members were murdered We saw the cadaver of MQM's Mohammed Hanif, a polling agent who was abducted, and talked to the medico-legal officers at the Abbasi Shaheed Hospital The security forces who were present in and around the polling station could not prevent Hanif's abduction

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We observed that the lawlessness persisted during the electoral campaign, and the basic conditions for correct electoral procedures have not been met in Karachi Professor Koechler and I prepared a detailed report on all evidence related to the infringement of basic human rights in the course of the electoral process to the forthcoming session of the UN Commission on Human Rights held in late March in Geneva

We are also observing now that the MQM has entered into coalition with the Muslim League in Sindh's provincial government, and that in spite of the MQM being the largest party in that coalition, it has been refused both the Chief Ministership and the Governor's position There are many MQM workers still in prison, and no compensation has been paid to those who suffered under the previous administration

◆

THE Mohajirs, or the refugees from India, were about five million in 1947 Two generations having passed since then, they are now around 22 million with no provincial bias like the Baluchis, Pathans, Punjabis or Sindhis, they are generally acknowledged as more Pakistani than any other people But they are discriminated against in education, employment and in the political process The other four main ethnic and cultural groups consider themselves as the "sons of the soil", and the Mohajirs as "aliens"

It is well-known that discrimination, which existed throughout history, troubled rulers, whether feudal, monarchical or democratic This is true about the Catholics and Protestants in Ireland, Buddhists and Hindus in Sri Lánka, Hindus and Muslims in India, and the Mohajirs in Pakistan

The Mohajirs in Pakistan and the Muslims in India, although their situations are dissimilar, are both "sons of the soil" as such as the other groups The love of both for their countries should be accepted as deep as that of the provincial peoples and the Hindus, respectively The solution lies in adjustment A society that tries to neutralise or expel communities different from the mainstream destroys its own vitality Maulana Azad of India had warned the would be Mohajirs on the eve of their departure that regional forces would not allow them to integrate with the local population

Just as the opponents of the Mohajirs should give up the path of confrontation with them, the Muslims of India should also take up the path of conciliation The enmity towards the Mohajirs and the Hindu-Muslim conflict, with fanatics running amuck, have done a great deal of harm to Pakistan and India All interested parties can manage, on the other hand, the contradictions as successfully as did their forefathers from Ashoka and Akbar to Gandhi and Nehru ■

Enron Rape of Rule of Law

UPENDRA BAXI

The author, a distinguished Professor of Law, is a former Vice-Chancellor, University of Delhi The following article has been sent by him to be published in this journal since a considerably abbreviated version appeared in The Times of India —Editor

The continuing saga of massive violation of human rights of the victims of the Enron 'project' unfolded so far in several people's reports, including the PUCL, Justice S M Daud's report and the Committee for the Protection of the Democratic Rights of the People, stands now internationalised in Amnesty International's report released on July 17

These reports indict all hawkers and peddlers of India's liberalisation programme, including governmental policy-makers, as the true blue blood descendants of the Company Bahadur The East India Company managers, however, were unable to claim democratic representation as do their latter day successor

It is this misrepresentation that these reports seek to correct and hopefully cure Assuming that the Enron 'project' is in pubic interest [an assumption dubious at its very core] the manner in which it is allowed to be executed by a trio of multinationals [Enron with an 80 per cent share and General Electric and Bechhtel with 10 per cent holding each] with the active connivance of subaltern governments in Maharashtra and the Union mocks all capital intensive celebrations of the golden jubilee of Indian independence

In contrast, the NGOs and activists all over the country, in assisting the Guhagar Taluka Enron Vaa Salagna Prakalp Virodhi Sangarsha Samiti, by practices of *satygraha* have represented themselves as the true inheritors of the ideals which animated India's struggle for independence In enacting all manners of peaceful protest not merely are they exercising their constitutional rights of freedom of speech and expression They are also implementing Article 51-A of the Constitution which obligates all Indian citizens to recall and cherish these ideals and to protect the Indian environment

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The Indian state's response has been colonially brutal The State Government has, true to the scripts of power, converted every act of people's resistance into a law and order situation without, as usual, ever having to justify invocation of massive police and para-military power in the face of peaceful articulation of citizens' rights to protest Dragnet arrests, police brutality and gendered atrocities are the order of the day, as these several reports painstakingly document No one is spared Medha Patkar, Mrinal Gore or Justice Kolse-Patil [one of the very few justices who upon superannuation seeks to enhance people's power in ways not available to judicial activism from the Bench] Not even young women protesters of ages of 15 or 16 who can at worst be confined to juvenile homes and never in prisons Enhancement of prison sentence of non-payment of fine is the rule, not the exception, despite the Supreme Court's rulings mandating incarceration as the last recourse

The Bombay Police Act, not the Constitution of India, is the basic norm of the Maharashtra-Enron Government That Act has now been invoked, among other things, to prohibit [a] "the public utterance of cries, singing of songs, playing of music", [b] the "delivery of harangues, the use of gestures, exhibition or dissemination of pictures, symbols or any other object or thing" which in the opinion of state authority offend either against decency or morality or "undermine the security or tend to overthrow the state"! "Preservation of public power" is among the principal grounds on which the freedom of assembly as well as procession may be prohibited If incidentally these provisions were to be extended to political parties in India, none would survive in an era of *the embodied harangue of rath yatras and Laloo Yadav!*

Fifty years down the road, the very existence of such wide powers is a testament to the betrayal of the fundamental rights of the Indian citizens So is the exercise of power under Section 149 of the Criminal Procedure Code empowering the police to prevent cognisable offences in the Enron case of spreading 'false' information against the government and the company, in effect the company-government! One wonders whether a multinational would ever be charged with such a provision! But more than 200 villagers stand charged with this, when they are doing no more than to exercise their constitutional right to freedom of speech!

The "preservation of public power" is a notion which applies exclusively to people in protest, not to multinationals As the many reports, including the Amnesty, suggest, not merely has the Enron maintained private industrial security forces but also it has, as it were, hired by the hour Maharashtra's para-military forces There is no warrant in Indian law for privatisation of security forces If these allegations are true, these alone furnish sufficient justification for invocation of Article 356 for the suspension of the Enron-Maharashtra Government, despite the Prime Minister's unthoughtful declaration of abdication of the powers of the Union under the Indian Constitution

◆

THE repression of citizens' peaceful dissent in such a severely consistent manner is violative, as the Amnesty report points out, of India's international treaty obligations

The Enron-Maharashtra Government violates, by its current actions, the following international human rights instruments Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights guaranteeing freedom of speech and expression, Article 9 of the same Covenant against human right to immunity against arbitrary arrest, Article 1 of the Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials and the provisions of the Convention on Discrimination Against Women The Indian Government which, rightly, seeks a permanent seat on the Security Council of the United Nations ought to aspire towards an exemplary leadership on human rights, consistent with its constitutional traditions India has already a proud record of participation in shaping many crucial human rights enunciations and instruments

The evidence of violation of fundamental human rights is so overwhelming that both the Indian Human Rights Commission and the Indian Commission on Women ought to justify their very existence, take *suo motu* notice of these violations Their statutory charters authorise them to so perform their duties

More so, because the several Bombay High Court rulings, as demonstrated by the reports, on abuse of police, of powers of the state have been blithely disregarded so far Indeed, the reports demonstrate sufficient grounds for their Lordships of the Supreme Court to initiate *suo motu* a social action investigation against an undeclared, and unconstitutionally so, of a state of emergency against Indian citizens exercising no more than their constitutional rights and duties Their protest also enacts the United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development ensuring human right to popular participation in developmental decisions and enshrining the norm that people are always to be regarded as the *subjects* and not as *objects* of development policies

There is absolutely no justification for the belief that for any programme of economic liberalisation to "succeed" constitutional human rights of the Indian people have to be so obscenely squandered The protection even of *market-friendly, trade-related human rights of international capital* remains possible, even though in contradictory ways, with respect for basic constitutional and human rights of the Indian people Even the bare notions of good governance, as per the gospel of the international financial institutions, entailing transparency and accountability in public decision and power demand a minimal respect for the Indian people's right to be and remain human

The Amnesty report, among others, highlights the need for transnational corporations to remain human rights responsive The problem in India is how to make the state similarly aware of its constitutional and international human rights responsibilities This can be only accomplished if Enronisation of the Indian state is allowed to be arrested by inhibition, by people's just constitutional resistance of a suicidal exercise of public power ■

Peace Process in Ulster

RAJU RAMACHANDRAN

The Tony Blair Government is against the imposition of any outside solution to the Kashmir issue It is, however, willing to help in resolving the issue if India and Pakistan so desire, the British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, is reported to have said during a meeting with Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Gohar Ayub Khan, in London (*The Asian Age*, July 27, 1997) The stand of the Labour Government on Kashmir should be reassuring to India, considering the fact that Labour in the Opposition was known for its pro-Pakistan stance

The Labour Government's current position should be understood in the context of recent developments in Northern Ireland, leading to the ceasefire by the IRA and the decision to hold comprehensive peace negotiations from September 15 Labour has been viewed as having a soft corner for the "republicans" who seek unification with Eire As recently as in September 1996, Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn provided a platform for the Sinn Fein President, Gerry Adams, to promote his autobiography, at a time when plans for a fresh IRA bombing campaign had just been discovered The Labour Party on the comeback trail had to quickly make amends, and a commentator writing in *The Times* of September 26, 1996 observed

> The Labour leadership's determination to ditch the nationalist fantasising which has plagued the party throughout the Troubles, and to pursue instead a policy of mundane realism in Northern Ireland, has been perhaps the least expected and hence the most pleasing of Tony Blair's reforms For the first time in Labour's history, the Corbyns have been firmly banished to the lunatic fringe

After assuming office, Tony Blair in a speech described by the *The Times* (May 17) as an "impressive first step", sought to allay Unionist fears about his government's intentions by declaring

> None of us in this hall today, even the youngest, is likely to see Northern Ireland as anything but a part of the United Kingdom

The Times commented -

> After so many changes in the past three years, Labour, like the weather, has almost lost the capacity to surprise There has, however, been a genuine thaw towards the Unionists

Thus, the party in power has first had to convince the country that it stood by the territorial integrity of the nation This sobering experience is bound to have its effect on the party's approach to questions of "self-determination" elsewhere

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THE IRA and its political wing, the Sinn Fein, have never had it so good On the one hand, the new government in Dublin headed by Bertie Ahern is far more sympathetic to their cause than the previous government of John Bruton On the other hand, they have been able to reach the negotiating table without having to disband the IRA's vast arsenal Decommissioning of arms has not been made a precondition for talks, much to the dismay of the Unionists The months of June and July have seen more incidents of violence and more discoveries of bombs in Northern Ireland, but the Sinn Fein goes to the talks with the privilege of "parallel decommissioning" by which para-military organisations would gradually give up their arms while talks towards a political settlement take place These talks could get jeopardised at any time, if the Unionists find it difficult to negotiate with the Sinn Fein having "guns under the table"

The Framework Documents proposed by London and Dublin envisage the creation of "cross-border" institutions, which idea has created unease among the Unionists, who see such bodies as facilitating Irish unity It is interesting that these major constitutional changes in Northern Ireland are being contemplated simultaneously with constitutional changes in relation to Scotland and Wales In July, the British Government published White Papers on the devolution of powers to both these regions, and referendums will be held in September for deciding whether the people in these two regions want separate elected assemblies Greater autonomy is envisaged for Scotland than for Wales It is a mere coincidence that major changes are taking place in the constitutional structure of the UK in the same year that we celebrate fifty years of the end of the Empire ■

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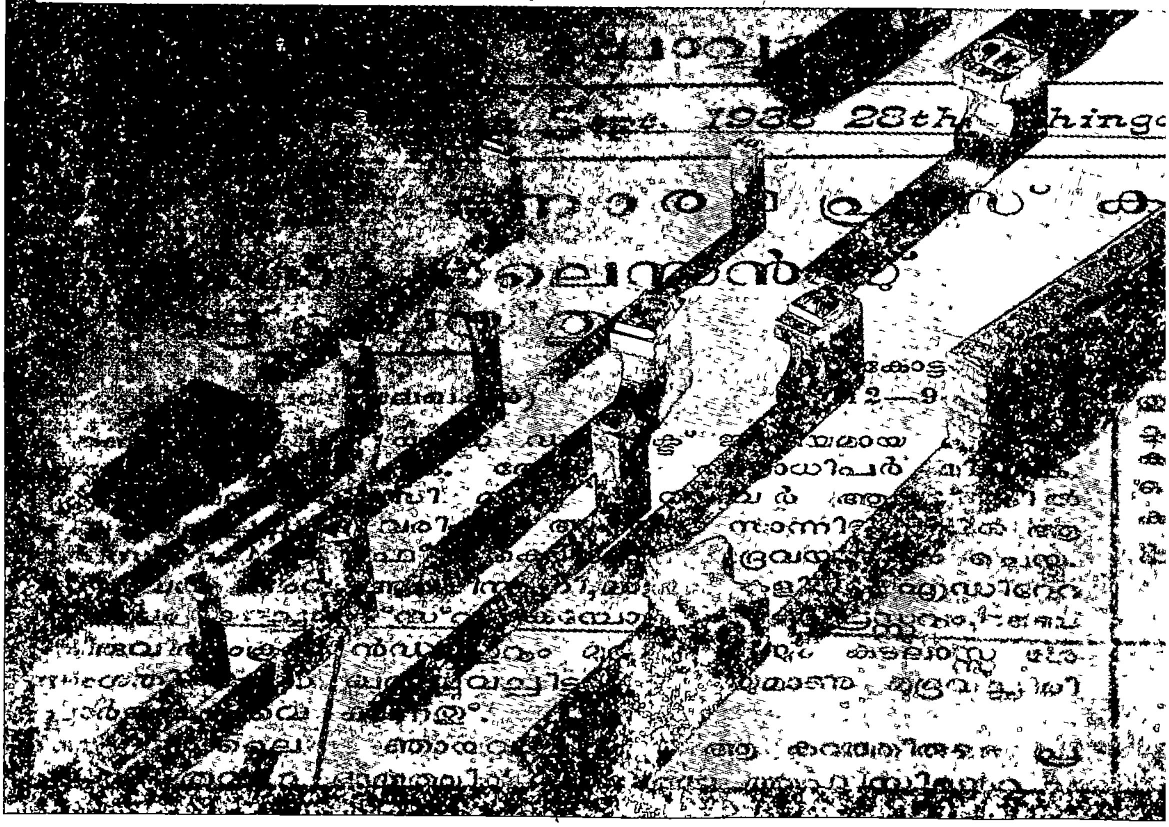

AWNS
EDOM

At every turn, Malayala Manorama rebelled against the manacles on Kerala's ankles
Manacles forged by time and tyrants
Its very first editorial struck a blow for those in bondage-the untouchables Thus began a crusade for education and human dignity
Eventually
The then Diwan of Travancore shackled it to stop its drive for freedom
On September 10, 1938, he sealed the newspaper, and threw the Chief Editor,
K C Mammen Mappillai, into jail
Malayala Manorama was still in chains when India celebrated freedom at midnight Freedom dawned at Manorama three months later, on November 29, 1947
From then on
It has been flapping its wings, flying ahead of time
Yes
Malayala Manorama goes beyond journalism With dedication and the human touch
A legend for 109 years Forever

Malayala Manorama
Estd 1888
KERALA AT ITS BEST
Malayala Manorama is India's largest read newspaper with over 77* lakh readers everyday.

Source NRS V

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Collapse in Soviet Union : The Impact–II

RANDHIR SINGH

The following is the second or concluding part of the draft of the first chapter of a monograph—Crisis of Socialism Notes in Defence of a Commitment—*the author, one of the most outstanding Professors of Political Theory of Delhi University (now retired), is working on It covers the early impact of the collapse of the existing socialist states in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union The first part appeared in* Mainstream *(August 2, 1997)* —Editor

The collapse in the Soviet Union is not just the collapse of a system, the debacle has been interpreted as in effect the liquidation of a collage of ideas and of praxis inspired by those ideas The retreat from socialism we have noticed is only a part of this larger debacle which has involved the loss of any and every theory, including Marxism, which could provide a mobilising vision for a social order other than capitalism, leaving behind a vacuum where all sorts of facile syllogisms thrive and which now resounds with the cliched-wisdom and commonplaces of Right-wing ideologies It is a theoretical defeat which, expressed more explicitly and vocally among the intellectual and academic Left in the West, has found its resonance in every other part of the world The quick and final unravelling of the first and now recognisably 'false' start on the road to socialism has been indeed so debilitating as to result in what can only be described as 'a devastation of the mind' on the Left, the magnitude of which is still awesomely difficult to assess

While the opponents have reached back to question Marxism, and with it any kind of radical or revolutionary politics for human emancipation, it is not difficult to find socialists busy questioning the authenticity of the October Revolution and its aspirations It is not merely that 'those of us who believed that the October Revolution was the gate to the future of world history have been shown to be wrong', as Eric Hobsbawm has put it, or that the era 'in which world history was about the October Revolution' has definitively ended, the October Revolution itself is pronounced as 'premature' In an amazing denial of historical facts, the Revolution and its sequel is seen not as a process which degenerated in stages but as 'a regression *ab origine*, or a pile of rubble' The view is common that the origins of the failure of 'actually existing socialism' lay precisely in a premature attempt to break away from the model of capitalist civilisation, from the world market, or therefore a return to the canons of capitalist social and economic system now taking place is only a necessary and legitimate historical process—a necessity asserting itself in history Arguments abound with such vulgar Hegelianism that seeks to dress up the actual outcome in the garb of historical necessity

In the recoil from general notions of human emancipation, particularly socialism, or Marxism which inspired it, all large schemes of social reform or renewal, however necessary, or cautious and qualified, have come to attract suspicion, hostility and denunciation This was always an intrinsic part of conservative or liberal-conservative thought it has also now become part of the thinking of a substantial part of the intellectual Left, loudly proclaimed by people who once were committed to progressive politics or even Marxism The very notion of socialism as a comprehensive reorganisation of the social order has come under fire Any such 'meta-saga' as Jean-Francois Lyotard—one-time Marxist radical, now a high priest of the much fancied 'post-modernism'—has contemptuously called it, is a dangerous illusion And this is being touted everywhere when the most lethal of the 'meta-sagas', the 'meta-saga' of our times, capitalism, is very much on, now more comprehensive globally than ever before! 'Deideologisation' accompanying the current triumph of capitalism has served to make capitalism virtually invisible Now it is only 'one world', the world market and 'a new world order', yes, 'globalisation' and with it 'the end of geography', including 'the territorialised nation-state of proven inadequacy', it is only the 'global village' and revitalised micro-histories With the collapse of politics understood in the sense of a collectivist project, the accent now has to be on partial, localised, fragmented, specific goals, on small-scale movements, and against universal, dangerously illusionary, 'totalising', perspectives!

A 'new realism' is abroad which rejects the very notion of a comprehensive reorganisation of society on socialist lines as an unrealistic and even a dangerous utopia—and many on the Left are happy proclaiming their loss of faith The very terms capitalism, socialism, classless society are suspect, anti-diluvian concepts which only dinosaurs, as it were, use these days—'paleolithic sectarians', Hobsbawm has called them 'Socialism has become stale,' echoes Zillah Eisenstein If you must, speak now in the vocabulary of 'democracy' And many are indeed doing so There is a swelling literature on citizenship, 'rule-of-law' and 'law-abiding state', multi-party politics, democratic and constitutional reforms, the virtues of civil society and so on, where socialism is replaced with social citizenship and the enhancement of 'social rights' within capitalism is viewed as the highest (feasible) emancipatory aspiration and, of course, the superiority of the market is taken as axiomatic The seemingly 'sensible and intelligent' retreat from socialism leads to an almost unthinking, fashion-driven rush in the direction of a non-planning or minimally planning, private property based market society Those not willing to thus travel the whole distance dignify their destination with that rather ambiguous term, 'market socialism' Much of what now passes for socialist thought with the 'new realists' is indistinguishable from run-of-the-mill liberalism

The 'new realists', most of them at least, are knowledgeable enough to recognise that the 'socialism' which has just suffered demise had little affinity with the real thing, with socialism of Karl Marx But they know now that the latter just won't work and one must take a practical view of things We are also told that capitalism that Marx wrote about and condemned is simply not there, not any more We have moved far beyond it, and for the better, into post-capitalism In any case, call it what you like, the reality of this dispensation, a society inescapably based on private property and the market, has to be accepted as permanent The only thing practical is to try for its more humane management It is indeed symptomatic of the shift in the whole spectrum of debate on the Left that loyalty to the Keynesian welfare state has come to be seen as an increasingly revolutionary position, and many on the farther Left have staked out this ground as their own Socialism, if you must still use the term, must be defined in terms of a series of remedies to specific problems within the confines of capitalism—though one is always free to hold on to a vague hope of a more equitable society

It has been for long a commonplace in social thinking that appeal to 'realism' is often a cover for abandonment of principles This is certainly the case with contemporary 'new realism', the new faith on the Left Far from being an accurate reading of the new situation and its possibilities, or even remotely adequate response to the theoretical needs of the present moment, in its abandonment of socialist principles, 'new realism' represents acceptance of a defeat, the Left intellectuals' capitulation to the ideological and political offensive of capitalism

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THERE is one aspect of this intellectual capitulation on the Left which needs to be specifically noticed As Gramsci had pointed out, the essence of ruling class hegemony is to ensure willing acceptance of capitalism's domination in society And traditionally it has been the obligation of intellectuals, to offer a critique of capitalism, to help people see through the existing social order and to sustain their hope for a future worthy of humankind—an obligation, reasonably well discharged on the Left, till recently Today, alongwith a renewed idealisation of capitalism and hosanna cries to its market, with so many, not only in Russia and East Europe but everywhere, in the West and the East, looking to capitalism for paradigms of economic and political success, capitalist hegemony in society has been sought to be further secured with the argument that 'there is no alternative' and that the alternatives tried or proposed are far worse or simply quixotic or utopian The instilling of such acceptance and resignation in society on behalf of capitalism is indeed a great triumph for capitalism And it is precisely at this moment, when a critique of capitalism was most needed, so many on the Left appear to have abdicated the traditional role of the intellectual as a critic of capitalism Ellen Meiksins Wood, a most perceptive analyst of the contemporary ideological scene in the capitalist world, writes

> The critique of capitalism is out of fashion—and here there is a curious convergence, a kind of unholy alliance, between capitalist triumphalism and socialist pessimism The triumph of the Right is mirrored on the Left by a sharp contraction of socialist aspirations Left intellectuals, if they are not actually embracing capitalism as the best of all possible worlds, have little hope for anything more than a bit more space within the interstices of capitalism, and they look forward, at best, to only the most local and particular resistances And there is another curious effect of all this Capitalism is becoming so universal, so much taken for

> granted, that it is becoming invisible
>
> Now clearly we have plenty to be pessimistic about Recent and current events have given us plenty of cause But there is something curious about the way many of us are reacting to all this If capitalism has indeed triumphed, you might think that what we need now more than ever is a *critique* of capitalism Why is this the right moment to embrace modes of thought which seem to deny the very possibility not only of surpassing capitalism but even of critically understanding it?
>
> I really do think we are in an unprecedented situation now, something we have not seen in the whole history of capitalism What we are experiencing now is not just a deficit of *action,* or the absence of the necessary instrumentalities and organisation of struggle (though those are certainly thin on the ground) It is not only that we do not know how to *act* against capitalism but that we are forgetting even how to *think* against it

That intellectuals have so largely sold out their critical responsibilities is one of the great moral disasters of our time, which, conversely also helps us define the courage of those who have stood firmly by their commitment as intellectuals

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THE retreat from socialism has inevitably meant a retreat from Marxism In fact, in its entire history, no specific development has more single-handedly opened the floodgates of attack on Marxism, its analytic categories and political project than the collapse of the degenerate and deformed regimes in the Soviet Union and East Europe which claimed to have successfully built socialism and to be on the road to communism This world historic event, whose substantive origins lay in a series of developments in the post-Lenin Soviet Union, coupled with the stagnation, retreat or even defeats of the international revolutionary movement in recent years, has negatively conditioned, in its process and combination, so much of what is happening around and within Marxist theory today 'Actually existing socialism' was born of revolutions primarily led by Marxists, had proclaimed Marxism as its official ideology and in its own way represented the first major and seemingly successful revolutionary wave against capitalism It should not be difficult to understand, therefore, that its collapse is seen as defeat of Marxism itself by its opponents In their anti-communist perspective which refuses to make any distinction at all between theory and practice, Marxism is proclaimed to be finally dead and best forgotten Marxism bashing is currently more popular in the academies of the capitalist world than ever before, now that, as the mainstream media tell us, it has been bashed in the streets of Moscow or Prague And Marxism bashers include not only the predictable conservatives but also trendy intellectuals of all sorts who are busy finding methodological and epistemological reasons to discredit and finally dispose of the entire Marxist enterprise of critical social theory

Marxism has, of course, been regularly denounced and declared 'dead' or 'failed' over the last hundred years, not only by its opponents but often also by adherents gone penitent Periodic pronouncements of this sort have been the historic destiny of the doctrine of Karl Marx In recent times, during the Cold War era, as mentioned in the Prologue, a whole generation of former Marxists denounced the 'God that failed', many others, including Sidney Hook had already declared the movement more or less dead by the 1940s The 1950s saw the intellectuals in France proclaiming the end of history and with it also the obsolescence of Marxism Across the Atlantic, in the United States, the fifties and sixties witnessed the emergence of heady discourses on the 'end of ideology', 'post-industrial society', etc , which made their own declarations about the end of Marxism In the post-1960s, as the failure of 1968 produced a renewed conservative assault on Marxism, it also led many disillusioned adherents to turn on Marxism itself and typically, we had a Jean-Francois Lyohard declaring that the era of totalising theories of history and grand narratives of emancipation was over The chequered history of the socialist movement during this period, its successes far outweighed by retreats and failures—the 'dissipation' of European reformism in both its social democratic and Eurocommunist variants, the failure of the new Left in the historic upheaval of 1968, the decline of revolutionary struggles and regimes in the Third World, the growing crisis of 'actually existing socialism' and the general 'exhaustion' of the global communist movement—indeed provided a certain credibility to such funereal pronouncements on Marxism, especially in a context of the unprecedented success of capitalism in its post-War boom But Marxism was seen to have not only survived but retained its intellectual and moral authority on the Left, and even among many critics However, the events of 1989 and 1991 are now widely believed to have delivered a definitive death blow to Marxism It is not only that the great world-historic project of struggle and transformation identified with the name of Karl Marx has ended, with it has crashed too an entire world view which inspired and sustained it As the enemies pronounce Marxism to be finally dead and done with, even friends seem compelled to agree As Aranson has argued 'Marxism is over, and we are on our own'

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If the attack from without has become more virulent than ever before, regularly proclaims the failure, disintegration and final demise of Marxism, transforming it virtually into a term of ridicule and opprobrium, within the costs of Stalinist legacy are being exacted in ways that are as complex as they are often unanticipated in Marxist theory The repudiation of 'official Marxism', as it came to be described, has opened cracks in doors that have widened to explicit assaults on even basic principles of Marxist theory There is a state of deep ideological confusion, disarray, and perplexity Even those who are not yet ready to give away the whole Marxist heritage, and plunge into the current chaos of academic and political obscurantism, are trying to retreat in good order With others it has become almost a rout

An interesting case here are the Left intellectuals who, still wanting to be socialists of some kind or the other, in turning away from classical Marxism, have sought self-serving refuge in what can only be described as pre-Marxian socialism, very much akin to what Marx at the end of the *Communist Manifesto* castigated as 'true socialism' In a manner reminiscent of the Frankfurt School of Marxists of 1930s, those theorists whose search for a humanistic socialism in the face of Stalinism led backward to Hegel and Kant, or others who similarly turned to the writings of the young Marx, they are resuscitating versions of utopianism, which Marx always frowned upon, often presenting it as 'post-Marxism' or 'post-modern socialism' Far too many on the Left are today busy, in the name of rehabilitating the 'idea' of socialism, or completing and perfecting its vision, putting into it every conceivable value they can think of or they think the Soviet system in its dark days lacked—often painting the darkness thick for their visionary light to shine the brighter[1]

This modern variant of 'true socialism' has its socialist aspirations but it explicitly abandons any historical grounding for them in favour of a moral appeal on behalf of socialism It indeed prides itself on a rejection of what it describes as Marxist 'economism' or 'class reductionism' and in doing so virtually excises class or class struggle from its socialist project Instead it would construct the socialist movement by moral and political means which are treated as essentially autonomous from any social-material basis or, more specifically, economic-class conditions The moral element is certainly the driving force behind any socialist project, but with the new 'true socialism', the morally grounded appeal for socialism, in effect absolves the socialists of any need to seek or formulate the new social material or economic-class conditions under which capitalist rule can and has to be challenged Socialism stands reduced to a 'vision' as it was before Karl Marx

As distinct from this regression to pre-Marxian 'true socialism', the dominant tendency on the Left, however, seeks to 'reconstruct' or 'modernise' Marxism, to 'go beyond' Marx in order to improve and update his supposedly antiquated methods and theories—a tendency that easily merges into the 'theoreticist deluge' of academic, analytical or exegetical, exercises that have characterised Marxist studies in recent years and are collectively spoken of as 'post-Marxism' (The tag post-Marxist, it has been suggested, has a nicer ring to ears than the alternative 'ex-Marxist', it evokes the idea of forward movement, of 'an upto-the-minute thinker', rather than, as does the latter, of a change of colours if not of renegacy itself) Earlier making sense of Marx, or more recently 'reconstructing Marxism' in the face of what is seen as 'a crisis even the end of Marxism', such politically safe exercises have inded generated valuable insights along the way but, as a whole, meant only an infinite regression in theory rather than produced a new synthesis of understanding, a theoretically more adequate Marxism, 'a reconstructed Marxism far sounder than any of its ancestors', as one such exercise has claimed for itself The regression has in fact involved a rejection of the Marxist tradition altogether, even its basic principled positions, and in a backward-looking combination or rehash of old theories and ideologies, it has adapted Marxism to the ruling class ideas, not only to liberalism, individualism, or positivism but even to the market, its idols, rituals and its dogmas There is 'an aspect of black humour ' about contemporary exercises at 'modernising' or 'reconstructing' Marxism, writes Suchting

> Marxism is reconstructed in something like the way in which those monks approached their work of 'reconstruction' by penning, as the *Communist Manifesto* says, 'silly lives of Catholic Saints over the manuscripts on which the classical works of ancient heathendom had been written'[1]

Many of the intellectuals involved in these exercises in 'post-' or 'neo-' Marxism as it is called, were once Marxist scholars and even politically engaged people. Obviously, scholars alright, their Marxism or political commitment was only skin deep. As has been well pointed out in their demoralised or fashionable shift Rightward, away from the classical to one or the other form of hyphenated Marxism, they have simply lost their frame of reference and in tune with the now dominant intellectual fashions, not hesitated to adopt ideas or analyses totally alien or even antagonistic to Marxism and peddle the most stupid platitudes of post-modernity. In trying to make up for 'the failure of orthodox Marxism', to replace its outmoded concepts or theories so many have only dredged up a melange of conceptual or theoretical banalities from all sorts of bourgeois orthodoxies of the present and the past: individualism (methodological, economic or political), theories of freedom of the market and economic equilibrium, consumer sovereignty, rational choice or preferences, distributive justice or equity, formal democracy, rule of law, freedom of expression, political pluralism, and so on. A 'realist' retreat from Marxism, when it is not a reversion to pre-Marxian socialism, has often been a reversion to neo-liberal orthodoxies in economics and politics. Discarding the world-historic aims of Marxism, gutting its holistic perspective and the emphasis on the structural basis of radical change, socialism itself is put in quotation marks and replaced by a programme of social-democratic econometrics to give capitalism a human face. 'Post-' or 'neo-' Marxism in turning away from Marxist revolutionary politics, has only created a metaphysics of post-politics. Hyphenated Marxism in its most important expression, indeed turns out to be 'a half-way house between the radical past and a final reconciliation with orthodox neo-classical economics, mainstream pluralist politics and micro sociology'.

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THE ideological retreat on the Left has been, as hinted above, both facilitated and conditioned by the overall philosophical context of 'post-modernism' as the cultural logic of late capitalism, which beyond the crisis of socialism or Marxism, reflects the more basic, epochal crisis of our times.

If the Right has proclaimed the 'end of history' or the final triumph of capitalism, many on the Left, unsettled by the movement's weakness or disarray, have also come to concede that an epoch has indeed ended, that we are living in a 'post-modern' age, that the 'Enlightenment project' is dead, that all the old varieties and ideologies have lost their relevance, that old principles of rationality or ethical judgement no longer apply and so on. In trying to be 'with it', quite a few have indeed queued up to renounce any lingering attachment to such old hat notions as truth, reason, critique, ideology or false consciousness. These are all said to be mistaken, rendered obsolete by the passage to a post-modern outlook that acknowledges the collapse of any hopes once vested in Marxism or any other similarly delusive 'meta-narrative' creeds. As grand narratives, totalising knowledge and even conceptions of causality are rejected for 'post-modern' fragmentation, difference, contingency and 'the politics of identity', the very notion of capitalism as a systemic unity, of its structural logic, becomes impossible to entertain. The 'post-modern' thought simply cannot accommodate the idea of capitalism, let alone subject the capitalist system to critique. The only option that survives the 'post-modern' nihilism is acceptance of what is and, therefore, also a submission to it. And what is, of course, is capitalism—capitalism, the universal reality and the market an inevitable natural law. To opt for anything else, for socialism, is to opt for a delusion. History is indeed over.

Surprised and somewhat scared by the turn of events a Derrida may, rather late in the day for him, nod feebly in the direction of Marx and even recall Benjamin's reference to the 'weak messianic power' we need to preserve and sustain during dark ages. Others of that ilk too may so shift and turn. But with its obscurantist celebration of all kinds of intellectually fashionable scepticism, agnosticism and cynicism, post-modernism is incapable of summoning any kind of power to understand and act in the dark age that a capitalism living beyond its historical time portends. 'Post-modernism' is indeed a philosophy of status quo—serving political impotence today wherein even the theoretical possibility of meaningful generalisation is rejected in favour of petty empiricism, and the painstaking search for truth about an objectively existing social reality has been abandoned for a comfortable subjectivism, wherein pursuit of knowledge has given way to academic word games and the faddish followers of Foucault and Derrida talk subtle abstractions about language, knowledge and power but are silent about the grim concreteness of people's powerless-ness or about how to empower them to stand up and resist, wherein power itself is seen bounded not so much by the structures of historically determined political economy or class relations and struggles but by discursive exercises, wherein alongwith a denial of the intelligibility of the world, absolute relativism in matters of knowledge or ethics has emerged as a new orthodoxy, wherein social reality itself is dissolved into a discourse where exploitation is only a state of mind or imperialism merely an unpleasant ideological construct Such is the philoso-phical or intellectual freight accompanying human descent into the so-called 'post-modern world', which is yet as ancient a world as capitalism ever was

'Post' is the buzz-word these days Scholarship abounds with writings that are 'post-this-and-post that' To be post-something is in fact the current fashion, especially for those who are ex-something Thus we are post-modern, post-enlightenment, post-scientific, post-industrial, post-structuralist or if we must be, post-Marxist, indeed post-everything—but 'post-capitalist' notwithstanding, it is capitalism forever!

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YES, there have been massive retreats and desertions on the Left But in the midst of it all, at the other end of the Left spectrum, there yet remain the 'heretics' who have refused to retreat or surrender, who still remain committed to socialism and to the Marxism of Karl Marx, who continue to believe in the necessity of revolutionary politics, of social revolution and the possibility of achieving an egalitarian, cooperative and democratic (ultimately classless) society which, making or planned, rational use of available resources ensures for all its members immediately a more decent, equitable and humane social existence than it ever lies in the power of capitalism to achieve, and ultimately an all-sided, genuinely rich human development for all as visualised by Karl Marx Firm as they are in their socialist commitment, they are also fully aware of the enormity of what has happened They know that life and struggle cannot go on just as before, but they also know that it has to go on The number of such men and women, though small, is not inconsiderable And their number is bound to grow as people—in the East and the West—in the First World of advanced capitalism as much as in its peripheries in the Third World and the vanished Second World as well—catch up with the ugly, rapacious reality of the currently triumphant capitalism In fact they have already begun to do so and are increasingly moving into action against it

As the Soviet Union passes into history, a heavy price is being exacted for the dependence, and often the identification of the socialist cause with the grossly deformed Soviet experiment in socialism There is nothing surprising in the Soviet collapse turning into a major defeat for the socialist idea And insofar as no idea can for long hold out against reality, this defeat means a difficult time for Marxist theory, all the more difficult because Marxist theory, while it has been eminently successful, especially when compared to bourgeois social science, in analysing the large-scale historical structures and processes of capitalism, even though it did not mean anticipating particular futures, has been by and large incapable of providing similar analysis or understanding when this future took the shape of post-revolutionary societies in the Soviet Union and elsewhere For many Marxists, the failure here included even the use of Marxism to defend or justify the ugliness, the cruelty and barbarities and worse, that came to disfigure what was built there as socialism It is no use therefore to assert, once again—as has been customarily done in times of crisis in the past—the 'invincibility' of 'the science of Marxism' (or the science of Marxism-Leninism plus, at times, 'Mao Tsetung Thought' too) If Marxism, with or without these hyphenations was indeed *that* kind of science, then surely socialism would not have been in *this* kind of mess today Such ideological rhetoric, however comforting when in distress, only betokens a dogmatism which treats 'Marxism as a hermetically sealed fortress to be defended against the enemies' Far from being 'a guide to action', as it was intended to be, Marxism becomes theoretically sterile, helpless against new ideas and challenges and incapable of that combination of principle and flexibility which is necessary for any socialist advance, now or at any other time But in rejecting dogmatism we must not lapse into 'realism' or 'pragmatism' that abandons principles in the name of flexibility Socialism *has* suffered a defeat, what has happened *was* unexpected But the experience of defeat must not be generalised into the impossibility of the struggle, or the confrontation with the unexpected that has happened into an abandonment of historical materialism which alone can help us understand and cope with it The defeat does not have to become a rout, nor disappointment lead to a panicky depression There is no reason at all for Marxists to either don sack cloth and ashes, or surrendering to the pull of conventional thinking or current fashions prune or abandon Marxism to jump on bandwagons labelled 'neo-' or 'post-', etc That is not the way out of the current crisis but buying into it and its logic of disintegration For Marxism as 'a critique' or the pre-eminent theory of human emancipation in our times, is not exhausted with the exhaustion of 'actually existing socialism' History is certainly at a specific crossroads, but it has neither ended as proclaimed from the pulpits of the ideological Right, nor is it afflicted with a post-modernist unintelligibility and therefore to be jettisoned as the currently fashioned theoretical texts are making out Classical Marxism still has sufficient resources to provide theoretical and political guidance through the contemporary world of late capitalism In fact the relevance of Marxism, its philosophical premises, analytical method and ethical commitment are most certainly going to increase over times as the unhindered logic of the currently triumphant global capitalism reveals itself, which may not be very long Though it is necessary to add that in many matters we have indeed to begin again, and the process of recovery of socialism in historical terms will be long and bitter

The task is certainly not a retreat into the idealism of setting forth blueprints for a future socialism, for, if not perfect, a better socialism than what 'actually existing socialism' was Whatever marginal usefulness such exercises may have, socialist renewal will not be substantially forwarded by constructing abstract models of socialist society attractive as such models may be in their detailed features To focus on such exercises, especially at this time, is really to mock what is sound and viable in Marxist social science Social systems do not come into being because someone has a good idea, by the automatic operations of principles Nor do they collapse because of lack of them Either way, the crucial dimensions of material basis and human agency are decisive

The real task therefore lies elsewhere As the struggle for socialism goes on, or is resumed, in the historically specific conditions of different countries or regions of the world, the task in its general formulation remains as Marx stated it at the very beginning of his vocation as a Communist

> It is not our task to build up the future in advance and to settle all problems for all time, our task is uncompromising critical evaluation of everything that exists, uncompromising in the sense that our criticism will not shrink either from its own conclusions or from conflict with the powers that be

This indeed is the challenge confronting Marxists today—an 'uncompromising critical evaluation of *everything that exists'* and this, in the present context means, above all, the failed effort that was Soviet socialism and the seeming triumph of capitalism today As a Marxist evaluation it must seek to take us behind the immediate appearances to the reality of things, the epochal historical processes of our times

The collapse of the Soviet Union, disastrous as it has been for socialism, also provides an opportunity for renewal of socialism The identification of the socialist cause with the deformed Soviet experiment, helpful in some ways, had over the years, for reasons already noticed, also become an obstacle to the effective prosecution of this cause To the extent that the Left has been, consciously or otherwise, positively and at times even negatively, parasitic on 'actually existing socialism'—here benefiting the most, Comm-unists have also been the worst sufferers—the events of 1989-91 represent a moment of liberation, an occasion not to abandon but to recover and renew the authentic Marxist tradition The Socialists, or the Communists no more need to carry the burden of a deformed and degenerated socialism, they are no longer answerable for its ugliness and cruelties The burden of a Marxist explanation of what has happ-ened is still theirs, but this in its own way can also serve as a vantage point to consider afresh the problems of the struggle for socialism, including the construction of any new socialism In this strictly Marxist sense, all Socialists including Communists are indeed, once again, 'on their own'

The road ahead is indeed an uncharted territory, there are no easy solutions or ready-made answers, not any more But the new situation also leaves us all, Socialists and Communists, free after a long time, for a better, bolder practice of Marxism, for a confident, truly innovative, non-sectarian Left politics in the tradition of revolutionary Marxism—in other words, free 'to think and act as Marx would have done in our place'

As Engels had insisted 'it was only in that sense that the word Marxist had any *raison d'etre'* In doing so we may yet draw strength from what the same Engels once wrote It is the end of the letter which he wrote to his comrade Sorge, the day after Marx died

> Local lights and lesser minds, if not the humbugs, will now have a free hand The final victory is certain, but circuitous paths, temporary and local errors—things which even now are so unavoidable—will become more common than ever Well, we must see it through What else are we here for? And we are not near losing courage yet

Yes, not yet For even as the first worldwide wave of popular movements seeking an escape from capitalism is disintegrating, the causes that gave rise to it not only remain but are more powerfully effective and urgent today than ever before Not only will history continue, the 'age of revolution' too is not over ■

(Concluded)

Police Firing in a Mumbai Suburb

A Larger Issue of Human Rights of Dalits and Not a Mere Law and Order Problem

R.M. PAL

The Maharashtra Government has been forced to institute a judicial enquiry by a sitting judge of the High Court into police firing on a mob on July 11, 1997 (in which 10 people were reported to have been killed and many more injured) demonstrating and protesting the descrating of Dr Ambedkar's statue in a Mumbai suburb in a predominantly Dalit area near Ghatkopar. While awaiting its findings as far as the police firing is concerned, it is important that we dwell on the larger issue involved in it. The issue is much deeper, relating to struggle for civil liberties, human rights, freedom, equality, and dignity of man—in short, recognition of a section of our people as human beings.

After the Dalits came to assert themselves, at least in some parts of the country, a hate campaign has been started not merely by upper caste Hindus in the villages, but, more importantly, by *Hindutvavadi* intellectuals, known to be the think-tank of *Hindutvavadi* political parties and formations. Later, when the Dalits came to power in some northern States, the campaign became systematic and virulent. For reasons of space, only a couple of instances are given below.

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In 1992 a *Hindutvavadi* intellectual, a senior Editor of a national daily and official mentor of a political party, wrote, while analysing the conflict between the VHP/Bajrang Dal activists and Buddhists on the Buddhists' demand for control of the Mahabodhi temple at Gaya (the temple is universally recognised as the holiest Buddhist shrine in the world):

> The neo-Buddhists and Ambedkarites are known for their militant views and violent politics and belligerence. The shrine must not be handed over to the neo-Buddhists. The VHP is insisting that any dispute over Bodh Gaya should be settled amicably and with the help of negotiations, but because of the militancy of neo-Ambedkarites and the belligerence of neo-Buddhists no negotiation is feasible.

Isn't he writing on behalf of the "tolerant" VHP/Bajrang Dal?

In 1993, another think-tank made a frontal attack on the Dalits for walking with their heads erect and ascending to political power. The "outcaste" people in power in the north have given rise to

> a combination of feudal gangsterism with casteism. It is an assault on the standards in which vulgarity is the right, mediocrity is the norm, intimidation is argument, and ignorance is truth.

He added that Dr Ambedkar

> had the element of hate in him. He did leave a legacy of hatred and animosity, his conversion to Buddhism was a cynical move, he had nothing to do with the Buddha.

This intellectual led the anti-Mandal agitation in 1990 and went to the extent of exhorting students to take to the streets—which they did. He too was Chief Editor of a leading daily in 1990.

These two "theoreticians" of *Hindutvavadi* nationalism have now unleashed their most potent weapon—their *brahmastra*. Dr Ambedkar was a traitor since he helped the War effort during the second World War to defeat Fascism and Hitlerism of which their Guru was an admirer.

Even the so-called liberals have contributed towards this hate campaign. Again, for reasons of space, only a couple of instances. The Chief Editor of a leading daily was very angry and terribly upset that Dalit leaders criticised Mahatma Gandhi. He burst out in a lead editorial:

> BSP's vilification of Mahatma Gandhi (cannot be tolerated), (BSP) is a pack of wolves, (BSP members) are shameless, loud-mouthed gadflies, intellectually retarded (suffering from) inferiority complex, street ruffians, (their leader devoid of) decency and common sense, hypocrites, loud and insignificant insects.

The Chief Editor exhorted all Indians to accept Mahatma Gandhi's greatness without questioning, even if one questions his views it must be "marked by sobriety and respect". Gandhi scholars and followers would know the Mahatma must have turned in his grave on reading the statement and the epithets.

A "liberal" who never misses the opportunity of calling himself a Gandhian (he too was the editor of a leading daily), and who during the Emergency of 1975-77 hailed Sanjay Gandhi as the new rising star on the Indian horizon—he sticks to this view even today and also subscribes to Sanjay Gandhi's programme of population control by adopting compulsory sterilisation methods—has now joined

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the hate campaign group and has lent his support to the think-tank referred to earlier, in a big way His main grievance against Dr Ambedkar is "he refused to use the saintly title Mahatma Gandhi", and that "no other Indian poured more scorn and abuse on Mahatma Gandhi than Babasaheb Ambedkar" (Anyone familiar with Ambedkar's writings would know that Ambedkar was a severe critic of Gandhiji with regard to *Varna Vyavastha*, but would find it difficult to notice even a single abusive word) This liberal gentleman adds that Ambedkar was not "the sole and undisputed leader of Dalits" and that he was not "the main drafter of the Constitution", there are other "people who played a far more significant role" Even the ardent Gandhians would be shocked at this crude attempt to rewrite history

Another distinguished Chief Editor, again of a leading daily, thundered in 1990 that if the Mandal recommendation is implemented, the administration will collapse, and that VP Singh has embarked on the task of dividing the country as did Jinnah, and that he is another Hitler-in-the-making

Apart from the doublethink in the *Hindutvavadi* leaders condescending to share power with the Dalits, while their official "theoreticians" systematically carry on a hate campaign against Ambedkar and Ambedkarites, they have simplified their political strategy to a simple theory All except those of their persuasion are "anti-national" The Congress is "anti-national" because it accepted partition, and those who fought against Fascism and Hitlerism, like the Communists, Royists, Ambedkar, and many other distinguished Indians and groups (on many of whom Pandit Nehru leaned heavily after independence) are "anti-national" because they helped the War effort and contributed with honour towards defeating Fascism It is none of their business, however, to appreciate the fact that had the Axis Powers won, the goal of independence for India would have remained distant

These "theoreticians" are not intellectually equipped to grasp the fact that Fascism was, and continues to be, one of the major sources of human rights violations and infringement of civil liberties

They do not have the sensitivity to feel the anguish and agony of a section of our people who have not been recognised even as person by our hierarchical society against which Dr Ambedkar fought Our *Hindutvavadi* intellectuals are not bothered about the fact that a very large number of communities in our country have had their social status fixed for all time to come They do not recognise the fact that every human being given favourable conditions is capable of developing unlimited powers of intellect and will, and that these conditions have not been created Dr Ambedkar fought relentlessly to create these conditions, and in the process also fought against the insensitivity of our people to which the great and good Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar referred (in the context of our system's attitude to women)

> In a country where men have no sensitivity, let not unfortunate women be born there Oh women, what sin have you committed that you should have been born in India

Dr Ambedkar's followers who are now determined to walk with their heads erect, are treated with contempt as "neo-Buddhists" and "neo-Ambedkarites", and are butchered for their "militancy"

◆

It is instructive to recollect 1984 and 1992 The refrain in Delhi in 1984 was the Sikhs must be taught a lesson The average middle-class in Delhi in 1992 asserted arrogantly that "Muslim militancy and Muslim communalism" has been broken Ayodhya In short, you can live in this country if only you accept the conditions laid down by *Hindutvavadi* intellectuals

The "theoreticians" referred to above are also not aware of Gandhiji's movement in the early thirties—short-lived though—against untouchability and for temple entry, and that he was soon compelled to withdraw the movement under pressure from his colleagues

They with the tacit approval of their political masters have gone on systematically to spread the lie that only *Hindutvavadi* parties, groups were and are true nationalists Such a mindset and thinking had caused havoc 50 years ago, once again they threaten the integrity and unity of the country

One hopes they will have the good sense to shed their irrational and unscientific behaviour and instead take a sane and civilised view of the problem, and give up the hate campaign that they have unleashed In any case, invective cannot be a substitute for logical debate and discussion

Finally, a distorted view of history involving hatred and threats will stand in the way of India civilising the social, political, and economic processes They will also result in increasing societal infringement of civil liberties and violation of human rights actively assisted by the law-enforcing agencies the kind of which we have witnessed in the Mumbai suburb ■

Of Scams and Media Credibility

G.S. BHARGAVA

"The seemingly constant flow of scandals and feeding frenzies had diluted, rather than enhanced, journalism's credibility The watchdog that barks at everything loses its bite" The quote is not of a defender of Laloo Prasad Yadav or any of the *hawala* case accused, prejudged by a vocal section of our newspapers. It is of Ellen Hume, the Executive Director of the Democracy Project at the American Public Broadcasting Service in the US It is from her article, 'The New Paradigm for News', in the *Annals, AAPSS* (July 1996) which I came across recently, thanks to the American Centre Library in New Delhi

About a decade ago many of us in India had been swept off our feet by the role of the US press, particularly the *Washington Post,* in unearthing the Watergate cover-up, and had got sold out on what came to be called investigative journalism In fact, there was a race among small time correspondents to wear the investigator's cap More recently, in the wake of PV Narasimha Rao's implication in a clutch of criminal cases, the *Andhra Pradesh Times* had a flood of scams from almost every district of the sprawling State The features editor of the newspaper, versatile Vakati Panduranga Rao, had commented on it also in one of his columns

According to Ellen Hume, however, journalists 'overreacted' to the Watergate, Vietnam and Iran-Contra revelations and became 'so automatically negative' in their approach to politics and governance 'that they are skewing Americans' understanding of themselves' The danger is greater and more real in our country where the newspaper reading public is becoming increasingly cynical of our democratic system itself They are either becoming escapist by burying their heads in soap opera type entertainment or turning nihilist, if they are too young

It is not the worry of the journalist if the community goes gaga, the pragmatist might argue Our job is to bring out the skeletons from the politicians' cupboards and in the process win larger and larger audiences for our publications Even a seasoned editor like Vinod Mehta of *Outlook* seemed to think so when he commended journalists for last year's bumper harvest of scams

Let Ellen Hume tell us about the American experience in the matter because it is relevant and also on account of the habitual acceptance of the standards and style over there by many of us She says

> When the *New York Times* quotes the tabloid *National Enquirer* as the basis for an O J Simpson news story, when ABC journalist John Stossel openly promotes his own personal political agenda on the air, when former *60 Minutes* (a CBS feature) veteran Diane Sawyer asks Donald Trump's mistress, 'was it the best sex you ever had?', when *Dateline NBC* contrives an explosion to prove that a certain truck is unsafe and when CBS Evening News anchor Connie Chung goads the relatives of public officials into name-calling, the difference between news, entertainment and propaganda is impossible to define

I have been listing similar instances from our newspaper writings in my weekly wail although not so graphically for fear of completely losing caste with the colleagues in the profession Just one more addition from a recent crop When *The Hindustan Times* reports were exulting in the exit of Laloo Prasad Yadav as the Bihar Chief Minister, the newspaper had a cartoon on the front page showing one of his little children as saying "Thank god, they didn't use Article 356 against dad, MISA didi I would hate to be called Article 356" Let those who have the stomach for such humour enjoy it I don't have to rub it in

Just one more sound byte from Ellen, which hits the nail on the head

> Tabloid news formats—emphasising drama, violence, celebrity gossip and sex—can boost ratings (in the case of TV channels) temporarily, but they actually may be counterproductive in the main task developing audiences that actively will seek the news

It is true of newspapers also because it leads to squandering the credibility 'just when brand-name trustworthiness is most important to their survival'

In this context, some Patna-based journalists, notably the correspondents of the *Deccan Herald* and *The Times of India,* apart from those working for the agencies obviously, have scrupulously kept comment apart from description of happenings Full marks for their professional reporting of exciting events The *Deccan Herald* report of Laloo stepping down as the

Chief Minister 'but after making sure that his wife was installed as his successor' was a real peach

Of course, the handling of the running story by *India Abroad* is definitely more pithy and informative without ceasing to be matter of fact But it is for overseas readers and the reports are apparently rewritten at the desk in New Delhi and perhaps vetted by news hawks like Tarun Basu and K P K Kutty

◆

I am sorry I was remiss is not including in my dossier on violence against journalists the police attack on the employees of the *National Herald* in Lucknow when they were demonstrating outside the office on a trade union issue The newspaper has done well in featuring the report of the incident on the front page It is not always that disputes between employees and the management in their own establishments are publicised by the newspapers The chairman of the Press Council of India and the Uttar Pradesh Vidhan Parishad have condemned the police action

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Incidentally, the *National Herald* had an interesting ANI item on a 'raging feud' between the CPI and the CPI-M in West Bengal 'over the formation of a youth delegation' for the World Youth Festival at Havana According to the report, the State Tourism Minister of the CPI-M excluded CPI nominees from a 13-member delegation he formed on his own So the CPI has sent a separate five-member team to the festival which opened on July 29 The more the merrier

In Nehru's time, there used to be a similar scramble for junkets in connection with the world peace movement So he parodied the British navy's recruitment slogan saying 'join the peace movement and see the world' In spite of the disintegration of the former Soviet Union and the spread of Western influence over large parts of Eastern Europe, communist outposts like Cuba and North Vietnam still act as magnets for a variety of 'Leftists' Perhaps the motivations now are twofold just the fun of going abroad in a delegation to avail oneself of state hospitality in the host country and the urge to see how little Cuba is standing up to US pressure

Talking of the *National Herald*, Nehru's paper which has fallen on parlous days, it seems the trustees who include Sonia Gandhi are unmoved by the reported resignation of the Chief Editor and the General Manager demanding investment in the 'sick' establishment Still, the newspaper never misses to publish Sonia Gandhi's picture on the front page

Finally, the *Andhra Pradesh Times* had foretold as long ago as on June 22 that 'if Congress President Sitaram Kesri agrees to Prime Minister Gujral's proposal, the Andhra Pradesh Governor Krishna Kant will be the next Vice-President' It seems from the report that the State Chief Minister, Chandrababu Naidu, actively promoted the idea within the United Front When the 'scoop' came true thirtyfour days later the young correspondent, Krishna Rao, did not wisely blow his trumpet Such modesty is an attribute of professionalism both in the newspaper and its correspondent

But I wish the newspaper had not carried the pictures—mercifully on an inside page—of four members of a family who had hung themselves to death Poverty was said to be the cause of the family suicide It happened ironically in the Ameerpet area of Hyderabad ■

Internationalising National-Regional Treasures

Rekha Saxena's Interview of
Sahitya Akademi Award Winner Aruna Chakravarty

The following is a recent interview of Ms Aruna Chakravarty, who has been honoured with the Sahitya Akademi award this year for the best work of translation Ms Chakravarty is the Principal of the Janaki Devi Mahavidyalaya, University of Delhi The interviewer, Rekha Saxena, is a Lecturer in the same college —Editor

Ques. Your literary achievements appear to be inspiring and forbidding at the same time How did you feel when you got the Sahitya Akademi award?

Ans. I was totally unprepared for the honour The competition is a tough one The winning book is chosen from all the works translated in the last four years from the twentyone regional languages of India into English My reaction was a mixture of shock and delight I could hardly believe my eyes when I read Prof Satchidanandan's telegram

Ques Why did you choose literary greats from Renaissance Bengal rather than from hoary antiquity or from the contemporaries?

Ans The choice was not deliberate even though I do have a preference for the period My translation of the songs of Tagore was a commissioned work Of course, I enjoyed doing it thoroughly *Srikanta* was my own choice I consider Saratchandra an outstanding novelist—one whose ideas are geared to present-day progressive thinking *Srikanta* is his most significant work, in my opinion I have nothing against the contemporaries though And I haven't neglected them My translation of Sunil Gangopadhyaya's *Sei Samai* is to be released shortly

Ques Would you care to highlight some pleasures and pains of translating Tagore and Sarat Chandra?

Ans. Translating Tagore was a wonderful experience The moment I took up a song the English equivalents of words and phrases came to me like magic I had not believed it to be possible Translating Tagore was as satisfying as a creative experience

Translating Saratchandra was more difficult I found his language and sentiments quite archaic at times and realised that my readers would most certainly do the same The challenge before me was to keep as close as possible to the text and spirit of the original while subtly orienting the novel to the expectations of a contemporary readership I had to enable the readers to hear Saratchandra's voice and revel in the sights and sounds of his world without suffering the petty irritations that yesterday's sentiments were likely to arouse In consequence, there was, at times, a feeling of strain

Ques. Translation is often considered to be an impossible job, especially when it comes to translating poetry Any comments?

Ans. Someone once said "A translation is like a woman If it is faithful it cannot be beautiful and if it is beautiful it cannot be faithful " An appalling comment! One that makes our feminist hackles rise But the crux of the matter is that the translator is caught in a desperate struggle to find the golden mean between beauty and fidelity He has to hold himself close to the text and endeavour to transfer it, at the same time, to a different ambience and the idiom of a different age and culture

When the translation is of poetry the difficulties of communication are compounded even further Bengali lyrics have defied the genius of many translators. Indeed, the finer nuances of the original metaphors eluded Rabindranath Tagore's own pen when he tried to find equivalents in English

Ques In translating Tagore and Sarat, have you ever taken the liberty of transcreating?

Ans. Well yes! I have, sometimes

Ques. Tagore and Sarat were contemporaries but poles apart in their life-style and attitudes Could you elaborate and explain your choice of the opposities?

Ans. It is true that Rabindranath and Saratchandra were poles apart in many ways For one thing, there was a gap of fifteen years between them For another—their backgrounds were vastly dissimilar

Rabindranath was born in the mansion of Jorasanko to a long line of illustrious ancestors—Saratchandra in a tiny brick house in a remote Bengal village to parents who lived on charity

Rabindranath lived a clean and idealistic life with the example of the Maharshi, his father, a shining goal before him Sarat emulated his own and was amoral, rootless and free

It is equally true that though Saratchandra cherished a life-long admiration for the poet and the latter recognised him as his literary successor and prophet of the masses, they never came really close, never became true friends though Saratchandra, at least, yearned for it more than anything else But they were both great writers—the two greatest Bengal has produced—so I saw no contradiction in choosing them both for my working material

Ques. In classical Indian poetics, emotions are classified under the headings of love, valour, pathos, humour, fear, the grotesque, etc How do you basically characterise Tagore as a poet? And, are emotions translatable across cultures?

Ans. How do I characterise Tagore as a poet? Well, for one thing he was a very prolific writer He had a very long and varied span of creative activity encompassing every kind of literary genre Even if one only considers the poetry—well! the range is inexhaustible He has written innumerable poems conveying a vast range of emotions and ideas and used a variety of images and forms

His earliest poems bubble over with adolescent exuberance Then comes a phase of exquisite lyrical writing—each poem like a polished gem shorn of the earlier embellisehments and extravagances Then, in the last two decades of his life his poetry becomes a medium of protest against any infringement of human rights—whether at home or abroad—earning for him the title of *The Great Sentinel* from Mahatma Gandhi

His last poems dictated from his sick bed are witness not to a creeping senility of mind but to a daring vigour He went on experimenting with new modes of expression till death overcame him These last poems are simple, terse and austere with not one superfluous syllable

To come to the second part of your question Are emotions translatable across cultures? Well! I'll say that though the operation is fraught with difficulty it is not impossible After all, human beings all over the world experience the same emotions and can relate to them even across language barriers But translating emotions requires a special skill and sensitivity in the translator and a thorough grip over the target language The more divergent the two literary traditions—the harder it is to bring them together in a meaningful way

Ques Literary critics in Hindi today often talk of a special type of poetry—*vichar kavita* or poetry of ideas Can poetry be a vehicle for ideas rather than emotions and retain its authentic identity as poetry? Where does Tagore stand on this issue?

Ans. Certainly poetry can be a vehicle for ideas while retaining its authentic identity as poetry and no one exemplifies this better than Rabindranath He was one of the world's greatest lyricists but did not dwell in an ivory tower He reacted against tyranny and oppression through the medium of his poetry

Towards the end of his life, when the world he was born in was disintegrating violently and brutally before his eyes, he wrote poems packed with power—tense and poignant Yet these "poems of ideas" never lost their lyric beauty Most of them were set to music You must have heard *Jadi tor dak sune ken na ashe tabe ekla chalo re* and *Hingshai unmatta prithivi*

Ques. It is said that TS Eliot avoided studying philosophy at Harvard to keep his poetry alive Do you find any such tendency in Tagore?

Ans. Rabindranath was sent to school both in Calcutta and England but he could not adapt to the rigours of formal education nor was he happy with home tutors In his *Reminiscences* he says that, as a child, he envied the birds because their parents did not force them to study His experiments with education, in later life, must have been prompted by memories of his childhood

Ques You call Sarat Chandra "our first and most fiery feminist writer" Would you please elaborate?

Ans. Sarat Chandra was very sensitive to the rights of women and his novels are almost, invariably, woman-based *Srikanta* and *Sesh Prasna* in particular, can be read as modernistic debates on viable femininity Three women participate in this debate in *Srikanta*—Rajlakshmi, the composite woman, Abhaya who rejects Hindu orthodoxies with anger and intellectual force, and Kamal-lata for whom love is the highest human emotion The interaction of these three strong women with a weak marginal man is the main thrust of the novel

The heroine of *Sesh Prasna* is an embodiment of the novelist's supreme recognition of the rights of women and their equality with men Untrammelled by relationships, as free in body and spirit as her creator himself, she is the medium through which the novelist reveals his vision of the future "Ten years from now," he told his friend Kamalini Kanta Kar, "girls like Kamal will be born in every home in Bengal "

Ques Images and metaphors are often regarded as the forte of poetry How does Tagore fare in this regard? And are the typical images and metaphors of one language/culture easily translatable into another language?

Ans. Bengali poetry, Tagore's poetry in particular,

I thought I could keep my rainbow coloured days
trapped in a cage of gold,
but alas! they would not bear the strain,
the bonds of tears and laughter
Spreading their wings away they flew,
my rainbow coloured days

I hoped that they would learn to speak
the language of my heart,
but all in vain, they would not sing,
a note of all they heard

Sometimes I dream I see them
fluttering in the dark,
beating their wings in some fond hope
against my broken cage

Can so much anguish be in vain?
Are they not birds but shadows?
Did nothing stream across the sky?
My rainbow coloured days?

(*Tagore*—songs of Tagore rendered into
English by Aruna Chakravarty)

is full of images and metaphors In rendering them into another language, particularly English, uncertainty and inexactitude is likely to creep in If the translator is obsessed with the notion of fidelity and expands metaphors to their fullest implication the translation is liable to become stilted and artifical

The translator has to get over hesitations and take a few bold decisions The effort should be to preserve the tonality and sensuousness by underplaying the metaphorical elaborations

Ques. What are the uses and abuses of translation?

Ans A translation is an attempt at communication on behalf of a culture, a tradition and a literature The translator, therefore, takes on the very serious responsibility of enlarging readerships from single language groups to pluralities of receiving minds all over the world

Identifying an author and, more precisely, the most significant areas of his work are the first steps towards this communication The sensitivity of the translator and his skill in manipulating the two languages is equally important It is through judicious exercising of the above that national, even regional, treasures become international ones

But the opposite is also, unfortunately, often true A writer revered in his own country is tested through translations of his work by people who judge by a totally different set of assumptions If his work is not well received it means that the translator has failed to speak meaningfully across the language barrier

Ques What is the future of works translated from Indian languages into English?

Ans. Already in these last years of the twentieth century the world is becoming smaller Lines between races and cultures are blurring Interaction between disciplines and languages are growing both qualitatively and quantitatively The process will gain further momentum in the coming century

In such a milieu translations from Indian languages to English have a special relevance India has a rich literary heritage to which the Western world has had little exposure With more and more translations in a link language like English read and spoken by many nations of the world, that gap will gradually be filled ■

A star came hurtling from the sky,
and lost itself in the deep dark night
The dawn will search each corner of the sphere,
and find it in the dewdrops on the grass

The light went out, consumed by searing pain,
on the path of sorrow over which it flew
When the sun sends down a golden ray,
melting the dew with a loving glance,
that pain will be no more

◆

Night and day keep faith, my soul,
what you desire shall be.
If you have sworn an oath,
your word shall honoured be

The mountain lying in your path
shall stir with a waking soul
From tongues that are mute today
words will surely flow

The hour is near, the hour is near!
Lift up your burdens, all
If sorrow you bear with courage
in readiness for the call,

Then, when the gong starts striking,
ah! what a wondrous sight
Pilgrims walking your chosen path
in thousands by your side

(*Tagore*—songs of Tagore rendered into
English by Aruna Chakravarty)

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS (JULY 27-AUGUST 2, 1997)

NATIONAL

July 27

- PM I K Gujral says in Srinagar that he had earlier asked All Party Hurriyat Conference leaders to participate in the elections to prove their credentials but they missed the opportunity and now they will not be included in the proposed talks with Kashmiri militants Talks with the militants also "cannot be held while guns are still operating", he adds In New Delhi, however, the BJP National Executive blasts the earlier reported Gujral offer for unconditional talks with the militants
- Punjab Chief Minister Prakash Singh Badal inducts 11 Cabinet rank Ministers and 12 Ministers of State to raise the strength of his Council of Ministers to 33
- CPI-M General Secretary Harkishan Singh Surjeet tells Home TV that the unity of the United Front has suffered because of the corruption issue involving the former Bihar Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav
- Hardayal Singh, an NRI settled in America, gets the first Ambedkar Gaurav Award at Lucknow for spreading the philosophy of Dr B R Ambedkar outside India

July 28

- Bihar Chief Minister Rabri Devi wins the vote of confidence with 194 votes against 110, improving on the performance of her husband Laloo Prasad Yadav who did not get Congress support
- PM Gujral reacts sharply to the remark of Leader of the Opposition Atal Behari Vajpayee in Parliament that PM's "contradictory statements" had created confusion in the minds of the people "Don't try to teach me patriotism I want to know who demolished the Babri Masjid the demolition of the Babri Masjid amounted to an attempt to break the country"
- Karnataka Express coming from Bangalore overshoots a signal and hits the rear of the Jammu-bound Himsagar Express from Kanyakumari killing at least 12 and injuring 82 passengers Congress and BJP members in the Rajya Sabha demand the resignation of Railway Minister Ram Vilas Paswan
- Hearing a petition filed by the Ernakulam Chamber of Commerce, the Kerala High Court rules that calling and enforcing of bandhs are illegal and unconstitutional and the organisers are liable to pay compensation to the State Government and private citizens for the losses suffered by them
- Rajya Sabha members urge the government to find out who was trying to pressurise Supreme Court judges in the *hawala* case

July 29

- Supreme Court dismisses Laloo Prasad Yadav's appeal against the Patna High Court's rejection of his anticipatory bail petition and he says he will surrender on July 30 before the court of the designated CBI judge in Patna
- Andhra Pradesh Governor Krishna Kant and Akali Dal leader Surjit Singh Barnala file their nominations as candidates for the election of the Vice-President of India
- Kashmir militants reject PM I K Gujral's offer of talks and declare that they are not "misguided youth" They claim "We are fighting for a cause, for the freedom of Kashmir"
- "It amounts to an infringement on the rights of the political parties, this is unacceptable in a democracy," says an official statement of the CPI-M reacting to the Kerala High Court's ruling declaring bandhs illegal
- Union Home Minister Indrajit Gupta tells Lok Sabha that the Centre at one time considered dismissing the Laloo Prasad Yadav Government in Bihar but refrained from doing so because he (Laloo) had not done anything which might be termed unconstitutional
- A division bench of the Delhi High Court is told by Additional Solicitor Dr AM Singhvi that the CBI has given a clean chit to the Delhi Police in the Martin Massey assault case who was allegedly assaulted by the police personnel for straying on to the PM's route

July 30

- Union Home Minister Indrajit Gupta, replying to the Rajya Sabha discussion on the Maharashtra situation resulting from the firing on Dalits in Mumbai, rules out imposition of President's Rule in the State, but warns the State Government of drastic action if such incidents were repeated
- Laloo Prasad Yadav surrenders in the court of the Patna CBI judge and is remanded to judicial custody as his bail application is rejected
- Punjab Police and Border Security Force arrest five terrorists including a self-confessed human bomb Sewa Singh and a Pakistani ISI agent Ali Saloom who are reported to be part of a conspiracy to kill Chief Minister Prakash Singh Badal and other top political leaders of Punjab

July 31

- PM Gujral tells Rajya Sabha that India is closely monitoring Pakistan's missile programme
- In Amritsar Congress President Sitaram Kesri says "The Congress will allow Gujral to unfurl the national flag at the Red Fort this year and possibly next year too"
- Congress members of Lok Sabha support the Kerala High Court ban on bandhs by political parties, trade unions and so on
- Arun Shourie's book *Worshipping False Gods* is torn by Congress member of Lok Sabha G Venkatswamy in the House as, according to him, it humiliates Dr B R Ambedkar

August 1

- Union Home Minister Indrajit Gupta tells Parliament that a high-level inquiry has been ordered into the conduct of CBI officials who sought the Army's assistance in arresting former Bihar CM Laloo Prasad Yadav as it was "a clear violation of established procedures and also wholly beyond their authority"
- Janata Dal President Sharad Yadav rules out his resignation either as the Dal chief or as an MP even after the trial court decides to frame charges against him and four Jains in the Rs 65-crore *hawala* case

- Patna observes a near total bandh to protest against Laloo Prasad Yadav being sent to jail Other towns in Bihar give mixed response to the bandh call
- Rajya Sabha unanimously condemns Arun Shourie's book *Worshipping False Gods* on Dr B R Ambedkar, calling it derogatory and disgusting and demanding its immediate ban

August 2

- PM Gujral after being heckled in the course of his inaugural address at the National Convention of the Janata Dal, walks out in a huff without completing his speech and refuses to come back even as Dal President Sharad Yadav apologises
- Former PM V P Singh returns from London after a long course of medical treatment giving rise to expectations that he would do something to keep the JD together

INTERNATIONAL

July 27

- Finance Minister P Chidambaram meets US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright at Kuala Lumpur during the ASEAN Regional Forum on security topics After his 20-minute talk with Ms Albright he expresses the hope that President Bill Clinton might visit India during the year-long celebrations of the golden jubilee of Indian independence
- Madeleine Albright, speaking at the ASEAN Regional Forum, castigates Burma, the newest member of the ASEAN, as an anomaly and a country "where the state and society are fundamentally at odds" and "whose government protects and profits from the drug trade"
- *Sunday Telegraph* (London) reports that the Purulia arms drop accused Peter Bleach, facing charges of waging war against India before a Calcutta court, plans to plead in his defence that he was working under cover for the British intelligence
- Leader of the Irish Republican Army's political wing Sinn Fein Gerry Adams is allowed into the US to lobby politicians and raise funds

July 28

- A new atomic bomb with "capabilities beyond those in the current US arsenal has been designed by a US government laboratory in New Mexico", according to the *Christian Science Monitor*
- Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov tells the ASEAN Regional Forum that Moscow continues to view NATO expansion as a threat to its security and military alliances as an anachronism after the end of the Cold War
- Nine ASEAN Foreign Ministers, in a joint communique, assert that "human rights issues should not be made conditional to the promotion of free trade among nations"
- Cambodia's acting head of state Chea Sim opens the parliament session and says the ouster of First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh and seizure of control by Second Prime Minister Hun Sen is justified and it is not a coup
- Vietnam elects a new National Assembly with Communists winning 384 of the 450 seats

July 29

- Malaysian Foreign Minister Abdullah Baawi announces he has received a faxed letter from the Cambodian Foreign Minister on behalf of that country's strongman Hun Sen welcoming ASEAN mediation mission to Phnom Penh
- Colombo police arrests five suspected Tamil separatists and are hunting for three more who are alleged to have been plotting to assassinate Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga

July 30

- Two suicide bombers blew themselves up in a crowded outdoor vegetable market in Jerusalem killing 13 and injuring 157 persons
- US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright says Lebanon remains a dangerous place but the terrorist threat has diminished The US Administration lifts the ban on visits of US citizens to the beleaguered country, urging them, however, not to take the risk

July 31

- Palestinian Legislative Council passes a resolution by 56-4 votes, demanding "dissolution of the Palestinian Cabinet" and asking "President Arafat to set up a new Cabinet" in response to a report of widespread government corruption
- President of South Africa Nelson Mandela officially declares a truce in the war of words with Nigeria saying relations between him and Gen Abacha are cordial and "we are working together to solve problems on this continent"
- Nigerian Police puts four exiled opponents of military rule including Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka on their list of wanted men A trial in absentia has already begun against them in connection with a series of bomb blasts late last year

August 1

- Taliban Interior Minister Mullah Khairullah Khairkhwa says there are a very limited number of Pakistani Taliban and they are volunteers studying in Afghanistan
- In their attempt to identify the two suicide bombers Israeli forces arrest 51 Palestinians with the cooperation of Palestinian Authority but fail to get any clue
- Taiwan-based Buddhist sect Ching Hai donated $ 800,000 for the legal defence of US President Clinton as a "person in need" and it was not political, says Zhia Hua Dong, member of the sect

August 2

- More than 200 LTTE rebels and 51 Sri Lankan troops are killed in a massive attack mounted by the LTTE on military defence positions The Army claims a big victory over the LTTE
- Premier Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan does not know to mark or not to mark Gen Zia-ul-Haq's death anniversary as many legislators refuse to associate themselves with the move
- President Yasser Arafat says Israel has launched a war against Palestinians rather than on "terrorism" in the wake of two suicide bombings in Jerusalem ■

HARISH CHANDOLA Nagaland Ceasefire

(Continued from page 6)

specially, who also came in to get arms, and were spotted easily The Pakistani officers were always afraid that they might endanger themselves by violating the security norms laid down for them The Mizos were their nightmare

There was one man they were most happy with He would stay in and never go out, however long the stay, until supplies of arms were ready, to be taken up the Barak river That was Isak Swu

He would never raise his voice in an argument and the worse adversity would not rattle him In March 1966 he had come to Delhi with the first Naga delegation to have talks with Prime Minister Indira Gandhi One early morning he and I were walking outside the Assam House where we were staying, and discussing where we should go to buy flowers for the Naga delegation to place on Mahatma Gandhi's samadhi, when we bought a newspaper from a hawker passing by 'Nagas blow train in Diphu 52 killed', shrieked its banner headline There were some people back home who did not want that delegation to go to Delhi, and to embarrass it, had done the bombing Isak was dumbstruck for a moment, but then recovered quickly, to ask calmly "Do you think this will prejudice our first talks?"

That forenoon, he did most of the talking on behalf of his Prime Minister, Kughato Sukhai, in the talks with Mrs Gandhi

He comes from a great tradition In his village, Chishlimi, people still tell stories of his father When the Tizu river used to be in flood, his father would cross it by placing a heavy stone on his head, so that its weight would keep his steps firm on the bed of the river, and the force of the current would not sweep him away, because he did not swim No one else crossed that river in flood

One should read his speeches at the meetings of the Organisation of Unrepresented Peoples, in the Hague, and at Human Rights Conferences in Geneva These show that he is not a blood-thirsty person

He is very different from his Prime Minister, Muivah I used to know Muivah, then a student in Shillong, as a laughing and jovial young man He appears very changed now bitter and hard, and with the Old Testament justice of An Eye for An Eye and A Tooth for a Tooth Perhaps I am wrong, because I have not seen him for years I do sincerely hope I am

◆

WHILE it has arranged a ceasefire with only the NSCN, Delhi is trying to say it covers all the other, so-called, militant Naga groups A Kohima report said the Indian security forces announced there on August 2 that they had declared *"a month-long* unilateral ceasefire with all Nagaland-based insurgent outfits, apart from the NSCN (Isak-Muivah)" "The ceasefire has been extended to the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang), the federal Government of Nagaland, and other outfits," a Defence Ministry press release said in Kohima

So we have two kinds of ceasefire one with the NSCN main group, for three months, and another with the others there, for just one month Then it is only with "Nagaland based insurgent outfits" But many attacks were being conducted in Manipur, so, is Manipur not included? Will there be no ceasefire there, and will the "Manipur-based" groups not be bound by it?

Who will monitor the ceasefire?

The other curious thing is the Atlanta (USA) talks between the Naga groups, which began on July 31 and are supposed to last eight days These have been boycotted by the NSCN (I-M)

The North American Baptist Peace Fellowship, which has sponsored the talks, has appealed to the NSCN to at least send observers, and had postponed them in the hope of obtaining a favourable response which was not forthcoming

The NSCN has two doubts Are the Naga people, living together, so disunited that some self-important persons have to set up a stage at a distance of 12,000 kilometres from home to reunite them?

The unity talks are being held on the eve of the forthcoming negotiations between the Government of India and the NSCN and its government for a final settlement of the Naga question At this juncture a number of persons want to jump on the Naga bandwagon, in order to participate in the negotiations, on the ground that the Nagas had united in Atlanta on a common platform

This trick, the NSCN says, is being played by S C Jamir, the Chief Minister of the Nagaland State, to create a place for himself and his henchmen in the coming negotiations Jamir, who wanted to take part in the Atlanta talks, was restrained The NSCN does not recognise the State Government, which it considers an appointee of Delhi Neither does it recognise some men working in the Baptist Church of Nagaland who have organised the Atlanta talks as the representatives of the Baptist Church

In fact the Nagaland Baptist Church Council, surprised that some of its members had organised the Naga unity talks in Atlanta, asked them about this action of theirs, and they apologised to it for not informing their parent body about it

The NSCN would neither take the State Government nor these churchmen in a Naga delegation to negotiations with the Government of India, nor would it accept them to participate as representatives of the

COMMUNICATION

Persecution and Glory of Sombhu Mitra

The otherwise excellent tribute to Sombhu Mitra by Subhamoy Chatterjee (*Mainstream*, May 24) misses a few significant points that need to be made Chatterjee is right in pointing out that to this day, *Nabanna*, directed by Mitra for the Indian People's Theatre Association, serves as a reference point for any milestone achievement in this field

However, it needs to be pointed out that brilliance of direction, acting and production helped to hide the fundamental political ambiguity of the play Though it purports to be a political drama, the play fails to come to grips with the political economy of the Bengal famine It fails to bring out the fact that the famine which took the toll of upwards of half a million lives was man-made and resulted from policies of a colonial regime totally insensitive to the worth of subject lifes This failure, of course, followed from the People's War and Popular Front policies of the Stalintern and Stalinism worldwide

Any way, at the relevant time, Bengali epigones of Andrei Zhdanov, Stalin's killer commissar of culture, attached much more importance to a play called *Japanke Rukhte Habe* (Japan Must be Resisted) written by the child prodigy, Sukanta Bhattacharya Since the end of the War, they are trying hard to obliterate the very existence of the play Till date they consider it prudent to exclude it from what is billed as the complete works of Bhattacharya, *Sukanta Samagra* The non-availability of this important piece in print is perhaps in itself a testimony to its anti-fascist excesses

Mitra, an admirer of the passionate sceptics, Bertrand Russel and Aldous Huxley, was never a member of the Communist Party of India, the organiser of the IPTA He broke with the IPTA rather quietly Disciples of Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot can hardly be expected to reciprocate such a dignified attitude At least on two occasions they have viciously hit out at Mitra

In the early sixties Mitra went on a study tour of Europe with grants from the Government of India In a short travelogue, published in the Bengali weekly *Desh*, he lamented the fall in aesthetic standards of Soviet theatre and cinema particularly in the field of acting Enraged Stalinists used the letters column of the *Swadhinata*, the undivided CPI's Bengali daily, for giving vent to unrestrained slander against Mitra, for far too long Mitra naturally disdained to take cognisance of the feat Later after much water have flowed down the Ganga, Volga and Yangtse, the CPI-M created a row in the West Bengal legislature and outside on the occasion of Mitra's appointment as a Lecturer in Dramatics at the Rabindra Bharati University

In his will and testament Mitra had stipulated a private and non-religious funeral His daughter, Saoli Mitra, herself a very talented actress, abided by the instructions (His wife Tripti Mitra, an actress of matching talent, had died earlier in 1989) News of Mitra's death was made public only after the funeral was over

One is reminded of the sudden explosion of politics-culture-police-crime nexus during the State Government-organised funeral, for Satyajit Ray One is also reminded of the Bengal Stalinists' attempt to derive political mileage from the funeral of the great novelist, Samaresh Bose, whom they had earlier systematically slandered as a pornographer! We must be eternally grateful to Sombhu Mitra and his daughter for sparing us such an ugly spectacle

13 Lendra Park
Nagpur - 440 010

Subrata Sen

Naga people with a different opinion

To make it clear that it would have nothing to do with them, the NSCN has decided to boycott the talks This was announced by V Sumi and O T Kaping, Secretaries of the NSCN's Government of the People's Republic of Nagaland, last week

Nagaland is so far away that one can tell any lie about it and the people in India will believe it That has happened about the eight years of ceasefire there, from 1964 to 1972 Why did it break down? The truth about it was never told Until B K Nehru decided to tell it in his autobiography *Nice Guys Finish Second* In it, he says

> On the First of September 1972, I made a long broadcast over All India Radio There would be no such thing as a ceasefire

His historic broadcast said

> Among the overground supporters of the underground are certain members of the Nagaland Legislative Assembly led by S C Jamir, the chief of them all

S C Jamir has been the Congress Chief Minister of Nagaland for almost ten years This is his third innings

He writes

> By the time I left, Nagaland had more or less been cleared of the underground forces the State had been freed of this scourge I was proud, I think justly, that this result was achieved during my tenure of office
>
> Before I quit, I received from Indira Gandhi (the then PM) a letter thanking me for my contribution to having peace brought back to Nagaland

That was in 1973, when B K Nehru had brought peace to Nagaland! The question is was he lying to boost his image, and Mrs Gandhi believing him, because that was convenient for her? ■

Posted at CPSO in New Delhi on August 8/9, 1997 Delhi Postal REGD No DL-11037/97

Licence No U-(C)-20/97 Licensed to Post without Prepayment Regd with Registrar of Newspapers of India under No RN 7064/62

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Edited and published by Sumit Chakravartty *for* PERSPECTIVE PUBLICATIONS PRIVATE LTD, 1E/12, "Sewak House" (First Floor), Jhandewalan Extension, New Delhi-110055 Tel 7516763, 7516893 Fax 7519838 *Printed at* NEW DELHI PRINTERS, 20/7 Old Market, West Patel Nagar, New Delhi-110008 *Editor* Sumit Chakravartty *Editorial Adviser* Nikhil Chakravartty *General Manager* Praveen Mehta *Executive Manager* Jasjit Kay Nagra

Warmest Greetings on Golden Jubilee of National Independence

Mainstream

VOL XXXV No 36 August 16,1997 Rs 7

The Appointed Day has come—the day appointed by destiny—and India stands forth again, after long slumber and struggle, awake, vital, free and independent...

It is a fateful moment for us in India, for all Asia and for the world. A new star rises, the star of freedom in the East, a new hope comes into being, a vision long cherished materialises. May the star never set and that hope never be betrayed!

We rejoice in that freedom, even though clouds surround us, and many of our people are sorrow-stricken and difficult problems encompass us...

...Whither do we go and what shall be our endeavour? To bring freedom and opportunity to the common man, to the peasants and workers of India; to fight and end poverty and ignorance and disease; to build up a prosperous, democratic and progressive nation, and to create social, economic and political institutions which will ensure justice and fullness of life to every man and woman.

...We are citizens of a great country, on the verge of bold advance.. All of us, to whatever religion we may belong, are equally the children of India with equal rights, privileges and obligations. We cannot encourage communalism or narrow-mindedness, for no nation can be great whose people are narrow in thought or in action.

Jawaharlal Nehru

(from Message to the Press, New Delhi, August 15, 1947)

Time for Renewal

In his August 15, 1947 message to the press Jawaharlal Nehru had, while paying rich tributes to the "architect of this freedom, the Father of our Nation", observed

> We have often been unworthy followers of his and have strayed from his message, but not only we but succeeding generations will remember this message and bear the imprint in their hearts of this great son of India, magnificent in his faith and strength and courage and humility

And what was the Father of the Nation doing on that day? As Rajmohan Gandhi has written in his *The Good Boatman A Portrait of Gandhi*, "Gandhi opened his eyes in free India in a Muslim house in one of Calcutta's poorest quarters" There was a stream of visitors to Hydari Manzil where he was residing And they included members of the West Bengal Ministry headed by Dr PC Ghosh Gandhi had earlier declined to give any message to be broadcast on Independence Day But he did give advice to the West Bengal Ministers calling on him on August 15, 1947 And this he did in short sentences

> Be humble Be forbearing Now you will be tested through and through Beware of power, power corrupts Do not let yourselves be entrapped by its pomp and pageantry Remember, you are in office to serve the poor in India's villages

After half-a-century those sentences acquire greater depth, meaning and significance than when they were uttered What, however, is most striking is that the apprehensions and premonitions of the Mahatma, inherent in those sentences, have come out to be true in the post-independence years

India today reeks with corruption from top to bottom—a byproduct of the abuse of power by those in office contemptuously disregarding Bapu's aforementioned advice The new economic policies, which have certainly abridged our political sovereignty, are widening the disparities among the populace since those below the poverty line have been left by the enthusiastic advocates of 'globalisation' to fend for themselves as the concept of welfare state is being allowed to die a slow and silent death in the wake of the depredations of the market

The polity is afflicted with numerous socio-economic malaise, the ever-increasing nexus between the politician (as well as the bureaucrat) and the criminal posing a potent threat to our democracy whose preservation—and enrichment in a limited sense—is in itself an unparalleled achievement in the developing world The proliferation of black money is casting its long shadow on every sphere of activity Despite tall talk of Panchayati Raj decentralisation and devolution of power to the grassroots remain confined to rhetoric alone Fissiparous trends, finding expressions in communal hatred and base caste sentiments, are on the rise in different corners of the country and these too undermine the very democratic edifice we have sustained for the last fifty years and of which we can justifiably be proud

Against this backdrop the latest political drama being enacted at the Centre in particular is bound to prompt a pertinent query in spite of some visible successes have we as a nation really registered any perceptible forward movement in these fifty years of independence? The extent to which the ranks of the poor has declined could be an effective yardstick to measure the advance of any Third World state like ours However, we can barely claim any genuine progress in this sphere, since beyond the statistical jugglery the bulk of our populace is in effect still condemned to back-breaking poverty and destitution

No doubt it cannot be contested that we have overcome many an adversity in these fifty years We have been able by and large to ward off authoritarian assaults on the fabric of our democracy even if some areas continue to suffer the consequences of lawlessness engendered by

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cross-border, indigenous as well as state terrorism We have also succeeded in periodically resisting the concerted bid to subvert the secular structure we inherited as the legacy of our national movement for independence Yet one can never be oblivious of the setbacks we have recorded in our efforts to defend secularism and safeguard democracy It is these setbacks which convince us that in the absence of a popular upsurge to sweep off the dross and dirt that have accumulated on the face of this land of ours over the years, arrest the nefarious designs underway to reverse the course of socio-economic development envisaged during the battle for emancipation from alien rule, and reconstruct the country anew for the benefit of the poor and the dispossessed, India cannot preserve itself and all that it personifies in its present shape and form

That is precisely why it becomes imperative, as we observe the golden jubilee of our freedom by offering our sincere homage to those countless martyrs who laid down their precious lives in the endeavour to break the shackles of thraldom, to take a solemn resolve That is the resolve to launch a new mass movement for building a new India by imbibing the spirit of our struggle for freedom and in particular the message and ideals of Mahatma Gandhi And this necessarily implies the renewal of the values of the independence movement that our present-day short-statured myopic leaders are trying to trample underfeet with utter impunity

Without such a step the celebrations marking the fiftieth anniversary of our independence would turn out to be yet another purposeless and ritualistic exercise

August 13 S C

Reviving Values of Freedom Struggle

THOUGHTS ON GOLDEN JUBILEE

RABI RAY

Now that we are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of India's independence I am reminded of something that took place about six months prior to August 15, 1947 I was then studying in the third year of the BA course in the most illustrious college of Orissa, Ravenshaw College

The annual athletic meet of Ravenshaw College is a great event not only for the college but for the entire city of Cuttack At that athletic meet certain students belonging to some students' organisations pulled down the Union Jack and hoisted the national flag in its place, and the then Principal rusticated the four students who had performed that act

A personal friend of mine, Pradipta Kishore Das, a Socialist, who happened to be the Ravenshaw College Students' Union President at that time, called for a strike in all the educational institutions of the State in protest against the Principal's step And all the educational institutions stopped functioning, coming as they did to a grinding halt Those who had witnessed movements before were astounded by the success of this movement

I vividly remember that when a procession led by the girl students began from the college to the city centre, that is, Gaurishankar Park, the entire city came out on the streets to see the procession

As the authorities declared Section 144 the students sat down there I remember the city people coming and offering *muri* and water to the students I also remember that the District Magistrate, on seeing the people's upsurge, had to withdraw the Section 144 he had himself clamped down As a result of that agitation in defence of the national flag we were apprehended and lodged in Cuttack Jail for two days and the government was shaken to its foundations

And besides registering our protest against the Principal's action the demand we voiced was that despite Mountbatten functioning as the Viceroy and Auchinlek as the Commander-in-Chief of India, the Government of Orissa must henceforth ensure the flying of the national flag in all the educational institutions of the State

That was the last struggle for freedom I was very fortunate to have participated in that struggle

◆

But the day we attained independence we were crestfallen to see that we got a free India which was truncated However, even at that time I was conscious of the fact that it was Mahatma Gandhi who opposed partition tooth and nail I think documents will prove that when Gandhiji was in Noakhali

*The author, one of the stalwarts of the Socialist movement in India, is a former Speaker of the Lok Sabha He has recently initiated a new campaign for people's empowerment —*Lok Shakti Abhiyan*— with a view to trigger a mass movement for socio-economic transformation in the fiftieth year of India's independence* trying to restore confidence in the minds of the riot victims, both Vallabhbhai and Jawaharlal Nehru held negotiations with Mountbatten behind his back and they agreed on partition I remember that when the Congress Working Committee meeting took place thereafter, there was a clash of words between Jawaharlal Nehru and Dr Lohia who insisted that Gandhiji was not informed about the talks with Mountbatten

I also knew that at the AICC meeting which finally gave its seal of approval to partition, the Socialists—JP and Lohia—opposed partition But Gandhiji advised that since a promise had been made it must be kept—and the inevitable happened

Nevertheless, we did not minimise the extraordinary significance of the event although the country was partitioned we had won our independence even if the free India we inherited was a truncated one

Gandhiji realised that all these people—Nehru, Patel, etc —were old and tired men who wanted to enjoy power whether or not the country was partitioned Had he thought of launching another round of struggle, this time against partition, he knew he would get a positive response from the people at large But although he was shocked at the attitude of those whom he had himself groomed up, on understanding their inclination he did not deem it proper to initiate a movement against them

Instead what he did was that he moved an amendment to the partition resolution and got it adopted at that AICC meet And that underlined that even if the country is partitioned the people of India must not give up the dream of a united India.

Gandhiji, I must point out, was not trying to unite the two countries into a single entity But he wanted to approach the masses of Pakistan since he was well aware that their dream of Pakistan was not the same as what they had achieved, and disillusionment had begun to set in Whereas as far as he was concerned he had the clear picture of a united India

Can we forget that when Patel refused to part with the Rs 50 crores due to Pakistan it was Gandhiji who put his foot down and compelled the Government of India to make that payment? Moreover he had also finalised his programme to visit Pakistan It was then that he was assassinated and we lost him in tragic circumstances

In our own context Gandhiji in particular imparted an 'economic content' to our freedom struggle It is this which distinguishes the Indian independence movement from other such movements in Asia and Africa Gandhiji spoke of the *Daridranarayan* In the course of his entire *sadhana* of the freedom struggl he clearly spelt out this economic content It wa embodied in the Karachi resolution about fundamental freedoms and minimum economic programme

But what happened after we attained independence? The Dasgupta Commission was set up b Jawaharlal Nehru when Prof Mahalanobis reporte to him that the fruits of development were no reaching the masses The Dasgupta Commissio was asked to find out why the fruits of economi growth did not percolate down to the people belo and why the living standards of the public at larg were not on the rise When I became an MP in 195 my first job was to go through the report of th Dasgupta Commission—which had identified an named those Big Business houses (Tatas, Birlas, etc that had fattened themselves at the cost of th people—and tell the people that they cannot expec anything better if the Union Government's pro-Bi Business policies continue

In 1963 when Dr Lohia became a Member of th Lok Sabha he raised the issue of poverty At tha time Jawaharlal Nehru was still the Prime Ministe while Gulzarilal Nanda was in charge of Planning Dr Lohia said 27 crores of people earned 3 anna a day They challenged the figure of 3 annas wit Gulzarilal Nanda placing it at 15 annas an Jawaharlal Nehru at 12 annas The consequence o that debate was that Dr Lohia was able to put acros the view that Nehru's policies have resulted i enriching a few

In 1945 Gandhiji publicly said that people shoul know what his views were on economic policies an be in a position to contrast them with those o Jawaharlal's They were not agreeable on majo issues In 1948 Gandhiji was assassinated And i his last speech before his death in 1964 Nehr conceded, while speaking on the budget of th Planning Commission, that the reason for the failur on the economic front was that not much attentio had been paid to Gandhiji's views on the econom

◆

LET us now turn to the present There were problem and difficulties on the economic front as well a differences, at times quite sharp, on economic policie as, say, between Dr Lohia and Nehru And yet fo almost 45 years the country believed in planne economic development--a legacy of our freedo struggle And one fine morning in 1991 at th instance of the IMF and World Bank the policy o this score was reversed without taking Parliamen or the people of the country into confidence Tha was not all In 1994 during Narasimha Rao's tenure as the PM the Planning Commission fudged statistics to show that the people residing below the poverty line number 19 per cent of the population Now, of course, the figure has been brought up to 39 per cent, thanks to Prof Madhu Dandavate, the Commission's present Deputy Chairman True, many experts do not accept even this figure saying it is low But the issue is different this is a glaring example of how statistics are fudged to befool the people

However, coming back to my fundamental point we definitely became politically sovereign on August 15, 1947 But after 1991 the sovereign space of policy-making was surrendered to multinationals and the World Bank-IMF It is of no mean significance that after the policy of liberalisation was adopted the World Bank opened its office here in 1991

In essence I wish to highlight the fact that we are not sovereign to decide our own fate Parliament's sovereignty has also been curtailed Our political independence itself is in jeopardy This needs to be understood in all its implications in the fiftieth year of our independence

In my view, there has been no change whatsoever in this regard after the United Front Government was installed at the Centre The United Front and Congress are on the same wavelength on this question Let there be no doubt on that score

Within 24 hours of becoming the PM I K Gujral went to the CII meet in New Delhi and promised to pursue the policy of liberalisation with utmost vigour The United Front Prime Minister did not want to take Parliament as well as crores of poor people, those of the middle class and lower middle class into confidence, he went to the meeting of capitalists and took them into confidence, said something which was pleasing to their ears He forgot about the large number of poor people

Despite all differences, there was a general consensus during the freedom struggle between Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose on planned economic development They had the poor in mind, on how his condition can be improved That was just given up one fine morning And now regrettably, other Opposition groups—barring the Leftists—are fully in tune with this line of thinking

Once I quoted Jawaharlal Nehru in the Lok Sabha to establish that Dr Manmohan Singh (he was then the Finance Minister) was not pursuing the course advocated by Jawaharlal Nehru but that of the US multinationals and the heads of the IMF and World Bank

So I must admit that there has been a fundamental change in the concept of independence of late One of the basic values of the freedom struggle—service to the *Daridranarayan*—has been dashed to pieces Dr Manmohan Singh was the Member-Secretary of the South Commission that was headed by that renowned Tanzanian leader, Julius Nyerere And that South Commission report had stated that wherever structural adjustment takes place it brings in its train inflation and impoverishment of the common people I told Dr Singh in Parliament that when it comes to "your own country, India, you have forgotten those very words which you had yourself incorporated in that famous report" And he had no reply

◆

In today's situation we have three major problems, three real enemies of the Indian people These are corruption in high places, excessive centralisation and consumerism

Corruption in high places and consumerism do not require elaboration By excessive centralisation I mean that the Prime Minister of India has more powers than the President of the United States And now while the PM does not wish to part with some of the powers for the benefit of the States, the States do not want to give powers to the panchayats and zilla parishads When the PM invited the Chief Ministers for a meeting on how to devolve powers to the panchayats, many Chief Ministers said they are not for such a devolution

I feel that all the mainstream political parties, except the Leftists, have willy-nilly by their acts of omission and commission only compounded those three negative phenomena in our polity The Left too cannot be fully absolved of blame The Leftists did not consistently project the alternative policies in the realm of the economy and mobilise the masses Instead they have remained in the UF with people who have no policies whatsoever They have thus failed to do justice to their alternative policies

Where do we go from here? I feel the most powerful party in the country is the party of non-party people I have always been a votary of parliamentary democracy Parliamentary democracy in today's conditions can become effective only if there is a movement outside the legislatures which have been reduced to mere 'talking shops' Legislatures should mirror the urges and aspirations of the country's common people That can only happen if there is a people's movement outside the confines

(Continued on page 39)

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A PAGE FROM HISTORY

Day One in Calcutta

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

The following report by Nikhil Chakravartty, the Calcutta correspondent of People's Age *(published from Bombay), appeared in the weekly's August 24, 1947 issue (it was wired from Calcutta on August 17, 1947) under the following headlines 'End of a Nightmare and Birth of New Dawn!', 'Calcutta Transformed By Spirit Of Independence', 'Hindus, Muslims Hug Each Other In Wild Joy—Tears Roll Down Where Blood Once Soaked The Streets' It is being reproduced on the occasion of the golden jubilee of Indian independence to help our readers capture the spirit of Calcutta, India's most vibrant city, on August 15, 1947 when the country became free of alien rule* —Editor

Frenzy has overtaken Calcutta It is a frenzy which no city in India has ever felt through the long years of thraldom under the British

When the clock struck midnight and Union Jacks were hauled down on August 15, 1947, the city shook to her very foundations for a mad frenzy overtook her 40 lakh citizens Nothing like this has ever happened before

I have racked my brains for hours, I have looked up all despatches in the Press, but still I find no adequate words to communicate the unforgettable experience that has overwhelmed me in the last three days It is like a sudden bursting of a mighty dam you hear a deafening roar of water sweeping away everything in the flood It comes with a crushing suddenness and strikes with the strength of a thousand giants

That is how all of us in Calcutta have felt in the last few days—all of us, old or young, man or woman, Hindu or Muslim, rich or poor In this mighty sweep of the flood none was spared And the floods carried off a lot of dirt and stigma of our slavery

Calcutta is Reborn

One hundred and ninety years ago, it was from Calcutta that Clive set out to conquer this land of ours and it was this city which was the seat of all his vile intrigues that divided our ranks and brought about our defeat. But today in the sweeping torrent of freedom all that has been wiped away, and once again this beloved city of ours stands out clean and full of radiance with the glow of lasting brotherhood

Everybody felt nervous about August 15 Weeks ahead authorities were on tenterhooks, more police and military were being posted to ensure peace Ministers would not permit meetings in the open to celebrate the transfer of power, afraid that the goondas might create trouble East Bengal Hindus were nervous that one little spark in Calcutta might throw the entire province into the flames of a civil war, Muslims were panicky that they might be finished off in Calcutta and many had left the city

Gandhiji had already moved his camp to one of the most affected areas—Belliaghata—and cancelling his East Bengal trip, had decided to spend a few days here with Suhrawardy But even he was disturbed by rowdy goondas, backed by communal groups, accusing him of being an enemy of Hindus News from the Punjab was bad On the whole an uncanny fear gripped everybody and the day of independence seemed like a deadline for disturbances

But how wrong were our calculations! With all our pretensions of knowing our people, with all the prophecies and warnings, bans and precautions, no one really knew how the people—common men and women among both Hindus and Muslims—would come forward to celebrate August 15 It was this unknown factor, which in every turn of history is the determining factor, that has made all the difference in our calculations and the actual happenings on that day

People's preparations for the celebrations of the day went on briskly, though imperceptibly The demand for Tri-colours knew no bounds, whatever be the material, whatever the make, every flag was literally sold out Even the poorest of the poor, coolie, scavenger or rickshaw-puller bought the *Jhanda* In *paras* and *mohallas* boys and girls were getting ready practising drills or formations, organising *Prabhat Pheris* Party differences, personal bickerings, etc were forgotten.

Discordant voices there were, but they did not matter Mahasabha first raised the slogan of black flags, but then piped down and declared non-participation But all the prestige of Shyamaprosad could not make any impression on the very people whom he had swayed during the Partition campaign

Forward Bloc and Tagorites also opposed the celebration on the ground that real freedom was yet to be won But despite the fact that thousands of

Bengali homes paid homage to Netaji that day hardly a handful abstained from participation Every school, factory, office, every home—be it a mansion or a bustee—awaited the great day with hearts full of jubilation

As the zero hour approached, the city put on a changed appearance On the streets, people were busy putting up flags and decorating frontage Gates were set up at important crossings, bearing names of our past titans like Asoka or our martyrs in the freedom movement The atmosphere was tense, should there be a new round of stabbings or shootings among brothers, or should there be return to peace and normalcy?

All Barriers Broken

THE first spontaneous initiative for fraternisation came from Muslim bustees and was immediately responded to by Hindu bustees It was Calcutta's poor toilers, especially Muslims, who opened the floodgate, and none could have dreamt of what actually took place

Muslim boys clambered up at Chowringhee and shouted, *"Hindu-Muslim ek ho"* and exhorted the driver to take them to Bhowanipore But the driver would not risk that and so they came up to the border only

But then all of a sudden in the very storm-centres of most gruesome rioting of the past year—Raja Bazar, Sealdah, Kalabagan, Colootolah, Burra Bazar—Muslims and Hindus ran across the frontiers and hugged each other in wild joy Tears rolled down where once blood had soaked the pavements "Jai Hind", "Vande Mataram", "Allah-ho-Akbar" *and above all renting the sky* "Hindu-Muslim ek ho"

Curfews were ignored, men rushed out on the streets, danced, clasped and lifted each other up It was all like a sudden end of a nightmare, the birth of a glorious dawn

As midnight approached, crowds clustered round every radio set and Jawaharlal's ringing words sent a thrill round every audience, "Appointed day has come—the day appointed by destiny "

With the stroke of midnight, conch-shells blew in thousands, conch-shells blown by our mothers and sisters from the innermost corners of our homes—for the call of freedom has reached every nook and corner

And with the conch-shells were heard the crack of rifles and bursting of bombs and crackers The very arms that were stored so long to kill off brothers were being used to herald the coming of freedom

A torchlight procession started in North Calcutta Tram workers, in all spontaneity, brought out a couple of trams crowded with Hindus to the Nakhoda mosque and were feted by Muslims with food and drink In Burra Bazar, Muslims were treated the same way and all embraced one another Hardly anybody slept that night—the night choked with passionate emotions welling up in so many ways

As the morning came the city was already full of excitement and pavements were thronged with people *Prabhat Pheris* came out singing songs of the national struggle Boys and girls marched through the streets with bands and bugles—bright and smart, free citizens of tomorrow

Flag salutations in every park, in every school and office Buses plied free, giving joy rides to thousands Trams announced that all their returns would be sent for relief And they ran till late at night along all mixed routes which were closed for the past year

At the Government House, our own Governor was to unfurl the Tricolour, but invitees were confined to Burra Sahibs and officials, the rich and elite, Ministers and Legislators They came in big cars, many with their wives dressed in all their fashionable clothes

Government House—People's Property

COMMON people, those that have made freedom possible, they too came in thousands, but they were kept outside, beyond the huge iron gates Why must this be so? Why must this occasion be celebrated in the way the White Sahibs have done so long?

I watched that crowd growing restless every minute and found among them the very faces that you come across in the streets every day or at the market or in your own home babu, coolie, student, Professor, young girl and shy wife—all jostling with each other, impatient at being kept out Sikh, Muslim, *Bhayya* and *Bhadralok* clamoured for the gates to be opened and when that was not done, they themselves burst into the spacious grounds and ran up towards the Governor's stately mansion

They burst into the rooms much to the annoyance of the officials and perhaps also of the marble busts of many of the White rulers that have never been disturbed in their majesty

For hours they thronged there thousands over thousands of them, shoving out many of the ICS bosses But it would be a slander to say that they were unruly How little did they touch or damage? Had they been unruly, as somebody had reported to Gandhiji, the whole place would have been a wreck in no time

They went there for they felt that it was one of their own leaders who had been installed as their

Governor And when the annoyed officials ran up to Rajaji to complain to him about the crowd swarming into the rooms, C R, it is reported replied "But what can I do? It is their own property How can I prevent them from seizing it?"

The sense of triumph, of pride that we have come to our own could be seen in the faces that entered the portals of the Government House It is symptomatic of August 15 no doubt For though there were restrictions and curtailments to real freedom in the elaborate plans for Dominion Status, the people—the common humanity that teems our land—have taken this day to mean that they have won and no amount of restrictions will bar the way, just as no policeman could stop the surging crowd that broke into the Government House

Outside, all over the city, houses seemed to have emptied out into the streets, lorries came in hundreds, each packed precariously beyond capacity, lorries packed with Hindus and Muslims, men and women Streets were blocked and the people themselves volunteered to control traffic

Rakhi Bandhan Again

LORRY-LOADS of Muslim National Guards crammed with Gandhi-capped young Hindu boys shouted themselves hoarse *"Jai Hind"*, *"Hindu-Muslim ek ho"*

Somebody in Bhowanipore waved a League flag under a Tri-colour What a sight and what a suspense But the days of hate were over and all shouted together, *"Hindu-Muslim ek ho!"*

A batch of Hindu ladies went to Park Circus to participate in the flag hoisting They tied *rakhi* (strings of brotherly solidarity made famous during *Swadeshi* days) round the wrists of Muslim National Guards. And the Muslim boys said, "May we be worthy brothers!"

Hindu families, quiet and timid *Bhadralok* families, came in hundreds to visit Park Circus with their wives and children in *tikka gharries* plied by Muslims Muslims, well-to-do and poor, visited Burra Bazar, and Ballygunge in endless streams And this was going on all these three days

They are all going to *paras* or *mohallas* they had to leave or where they had lost their near and dear ones Today there is no area more attractive and more crowded than the very spots where the worst butcheries had taken place As if to expiate for the sins of the last one year, Hindus and Muslims of Calcutta vied with each other to consecrate their city with a new creed of mighty brotherhood

On the evening of August 16, one year back, I sent you a despatch which could describe but inadequately the mad lust for fratricidal blood that had overtaken Calcutta that day To mark the anniversary of that day I visited the crowded parts of Hindu Burra Bazar and the Muslim Colootola where in this one year hardly anyone passed alive when spotted by the opposite community But this evening Muslims were the guests of honour at Burra Bazar and Hindus, as they visited Colootola, were drenched with rose-water and *attar* and greeted with lusty cheers of *"Jai Hind"*

On this very evening, at Park Circus, was held a huge meeting of Hindus and Muslims Suhrawardy, J C Gupta, MLA, and Bhowani Sen spoke It was here that Suhrawardy asked the Muslims to go and implore the evicted Hindus to come back to Park Circus

At Belliaghata, Gandhiji's presence itself has brought back hundreds of Muslim families who had to leave in terror of their lives only a few weeks back And Gandhiji's prayer meetings are attended by an ever increasing concourse of Hindus and Muslims—themselves living symbols of Hindu-Muslim unity

Reports from Bengal districts also prove that this remarkable upsurge of solidarity was not confined to Calcutta alone In Dacca, despite panic, Hindus and Muslims jointly participated in the celebration of Pakistan, and Muslim leaders themselves intervened in one case where the Congress flag was lowered, and the flag was raised again

Everywhere Hindus showed response by honouring the Pakistan flag Joint Hindu-Muslim demonstrations were the marked features of the occasion

Reports from Comilla, Kusthia, Dinajpore, Krishnanagore, Munshiganj, Malda and Jessore, all show that August 15 had passed off in peace and amity Only local fracas were reported from Kanchrapara, but the great and good tidings from Calcutta eased the situation there

In this mighty flood of freedom and brotherhood there is yet the sense of suspense, for it came with such an incredible suddenness and magnitude that many think it is too good to last long It is like holding a precious glass dome in your hands while you are in suspense that it might fall and break at any moment

Spontaneous assertion of people's will for freedom and brotherly solidarity needs to be harnessed in lasting forms and that is where our leaders will be tested in the coming weeks

Whatever happens, August 15 will be cherished for Calcutta's grand celebration on the eve of the end of the dark night of slavery and the dawn of freedom Calcutta yesterday was the symbol of our servitude and fratricidal hate Calcutta today is the beacon-light for free India, asserting that freedom once resurrected can never be curbed or destroyed, for all our millions of Hindus and Muslims together are ready to stand together as its proud sentinels ■

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■ SPEER 437 95

Fifty Years of Freedom from the Perspective of the Poor

ARUN KUMAR

The author is an Associate Professor, Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi The following paper was presented as the inaugural address of the academic session 1997-98 at Vidyajyoti College of Theosophy (Delhi, July 14, 1997)

The British transferred political power to Indians in 1947 and the nation is celebrating its fiftieth year of political freedom These fifty years have been a period of dramatic change in the world and more so in India India is a diverse country and this was so even at the time of independence, it is differentiated culturally, socially, politically and economically across regions and within regions This combination of political freedom, heterogeneity and rapidity of change has led to varied consequences for the different segments of society In turn, this is posing challenges for India and sorely testing the limits of nationhood

Today, the country is beset with a host of economic, social and political problems It is now facing the challenge of globalisation when it is internally weak, often the writ of the national government is hardly apparent in Delhi In a sense, while this is a time of celebration because the nation has survived the various challenges, it is equally, if not more, a time for introspection about the state of affairs in the country

The Content of Freedom

FREEDOM is a concept which changes with the times and the social context When we became free in 1947, the country was largely rural, with most people engaged in the primary sector of the economy Feudalism, tradition and hierarchy had a stranglehold over the people Their hold is not due to entirely indigenous reasons because these tendencies got reinforced by the needs of the colonial government to subjugate us

The British introduced modern education, civil service and judiciary in India but with the intention of keeping the local population under control The police in England has the image of a neighbourhood friend, yet in India it was the instrument of the Raj, a brutalised force, standing in opposition to the people

Large farmers in Britain were the instruments of introduction of capitalism in British agriculture In India, they became instruments of feudal control and collectors of rent from the Indian peasants their oppressors The railways were the great force of industrialisation of Britain but in nineteenth century India they aided the decimation of indigenous industry through the import of cheap manufactured products from the West History is replete with examples of instruments or institutions which may be progressive in one context becoming repressive in another

This is often a source of great confusion to the analysts and people at large A partial analysis can point to some positive features of any policy or social institutions Thus, while many features of the British rule in India modernised the country, the overall impact was negative since it entrenched hierarchy and tradition To perpetuate their rule, the British had to eliminate the dynamic elements of society, replace the indigenous institutions with their own and establish their hegemony over ideas These are the sources of poverty in a nation

Progressive forces were not welcome for one simple reason, they, over time, would (sooner rather than later) question the British rule itself This did happen to an extent

The small middle class elite created to help the British rule in the country provided the leadership to the independence movement However, this elite was an amalgam of Indian traditions and Western modernisation While its psyche was Indian, its aspirations were Western It became progressively more rootless since it craved to be something else The dynamic elements of Indian society were replaced by the modified Western institutions designed to perpetuate British control and manned by the new elite which aspired to be the Brown sahib Its alienation from the Indian people who had only experienced the negative consequences of Westernisation and its colonial rule increased over time

In 1947, power was transferred to this alienated elite which consisted of the middle class, a small business community and a feudal structure The euphoria of independence hid the emerging gap between the two sections The agenda set by the elite was taken to represent the interest of the nation as a whole for the widest good of all The nation at that juncture was backward and underdeveloped and freedom was taken to mean the best for all That was the 'tryst with destiny'

Economic Conditions/Trends pre-1947 . The Setting to Independence

THE annual rate of growth of the economy averaged 1 0 per cent in the first 50 years of this century India was predominantly agricultural with little industry and almost no technology of its own or the capacity to develop it It was an underdeveloped society with entrenched poverty

TABLES
Selected Indicators for India for 1901 to 1991

	1901	*1911*	*1921*	*1931*	*1941*
Growth Rate of Population		6 23	0 86	10 63	15 02
Gr Rate of National Income		23 35	-8 79	29 31	8 46
Gr Rate of Per Capita Income		12 98	-1 37	6 57	-5 41
Share of Agriculture	0 73	0 69	0 68	0 59	0 57
Share of Manufacturing	0 11	0 12	0 14	0 16	0 16
Birth Rate	47 3	46 3	46 6	43 1	41 9
Death Rate	43 7	49 8	37 3	31 5	25 2
Life Expectancy at Birth	23	20 2	26 7	31 7	32 1
Literacy Rate/Students %	2	2 9	3 6	3 7	5 4
Railway Passengers (mill)	183 1	366 6	534 6	505	651 6
Net Avail Food (ton/yr)	0 17	0 18	0 18	0 17	0 15
Share of Urban Population %	10	9 4	10 2	11 1	12 8
Poverty Ratio					

	1951	*1961*	*1971*	*1981*	*1991*
Growth Rate of Population		21 63	24 82	24 64	23 85
Gr Rate of National Income		46 73	43 75	35 39	73 37
Gr Rate of Per Capita Income		19 82	12 54	7 27	36 32
Share of Agriculture	0 56	0 52	0 46	0 40	0 33
Share of Manufacturing	0 15	0 19	0 22	0 24	0 28
Birth Rate	39 9	41 7	36 9	33 9	29 5
Death Rate	27 4	22 8	14 9	12 5	9 8
Life Expectancy at Birth	32 1	41 3	45 6	50 4	58 7
Literacy Rate/Students %	18 3	28 3	34 4	43 6	52 2
Railway Passenger (mill)	1284	1594	2431	3613	3858
Net Avail Food (ton/yr)	0 15	0 17	0 17	0 17	0 19
Share of Urban Population %	16 1		20		27
Poverty Ratio			56 4	45 6	35 6

Source *Economic Survey 1997* for data from 1951 to 1991
The Cambridge Economic History of India Vol II for data from 1901-1941

Notes

1 1901 to 1941 is NDP at 1946-47 pr Rest GDP at factor cost
2 Literacy upto 1941 is students as % of population
3 Poverty ratio for 1971 refers to 1972-73 and 1981 to 1982-83
4 Data upto 1941 and after are not directly comparable

The little industry that India had was the result of investments in the inter-War period when the British for strategic reasons were forced to allow some industry to develop The bulk of the population was rural relying on a stagnant agriculture dependent on monsoons Droughts recurred and led to terrible consequences for the population The people's capacity to resist calamities was negligible

The socio-economic indicators at the time of independence give the true picture The living conditions of the people were poor Most people lived in *kuccha* structures and did not have assured drinking water or toilets Access to roads was poor and large areas often got cut off due to floods Literacy was negligible Health conditions were abominable Child mortality was high Malnutrition and hunger were widespread so that the death rate was high In spite of the high birth rate there were periods when the country's population hardly grew (Data in Tables)

Modern amenities like piped drinking water, electricity and railways were available only to the elite in some urban areas Higher education centres were few and those catering to Science and Technology were even fewer Even Universities were not designed for research and emphasis on libraries was minimal

Hopes from Independence . The National Vision

THE people's expectation from independence was simple Like, to lift the population from its grinding poverty through creation of productive employment, make agriculture dynamic, provide education and health for all, to create modern industry and catch up in science and technology In other words, to take the populace towards a civilised existence with assured opportunities and modern infrastructure The elite articulated all this on behalf of all

The agenda seemed to be all-inclusive and not just as a conspiracy to fool the non-elite Growth with justice was emphasised and distributive justice was a goal The state was given a leading role in building this civilised life by intervening on behalf of the poor Following this, land was sought to be redistributed in spite of stiff opposition from landed interests

Social change was sought to be introduced through progressive legislation Reservations for the SC/ST was constitutionally provided for as was the goal of compulsory primary education Abolition of untouchability, child marriage, etc became part of national goals

Even Indian business and top industry agreed to assign a large role to the state in providing cheap infrastructure and accelerating industrialisation They proposed the creation of the public sector since they realised that they did not have the capital required to create the modern infrastructure that they would need for industrialisation

It is in this context of industrialisation and the need to have a high rate of economic growth that planning was adopted This alongwith licensing become the instrument for optimum utilisation of resources to produce growth with justice

In brief, there was a national vision with consensus amongst the ruling elite that the state would play an interventionist role in favour of the poor, accelerate growth and promote social change This national vision, emerging from the need to throw the yoke of foreigners, also encompassed the idea of self-reliance

Socio-Economic Indicators from 1950 to 1990

THE economy which had been completely opened up by the British with negligible tariffs and no restrictions was, relatively speaking, closed so that scarce foreign exchange could be conserved for essential needs Imports of technology and capital goods required for industrialisation was increased and that of inessentials was curbed

Industry was given a high priority and surpluses from agriculture were ploughed into this sector The Soviet model of heavy industrialisation was favoured in the belief that this would modernise the country in the shortest of time

The average annual rate of growth accelerated to about 4 5 per cent per annum during this period (of course, with ups and downs) Growth in agriculture has averaged at 2 6 per cent and food availability has gone up Share of non-agriculture in output and employment has risen so that now agriculture officially accounts for only 25 per cent of the output Urbanisation has increased rapidly accounting for 27 per cent of the population Famine deaths have been mostly eliminated Literacy has spread and the average life expectancy has increased substantially The death rate has sharply dropped as has child mortality resulting in a sharp rise in the rate of growth of population

The availability of modern infrastructure like electricity, roads, piped drinking water, etc has increased substantially The percentage of population living in *pucca* houses with sanitation has increased The country has attained a diversified industrial base and has capabilities in basic areas of Science and Technology so that it is one of the few under-developed countries which can boast of an independent base for development Achievements of independent India even going by the above partial list are indeed impressive (See Tables)

Dichotomous Growth

THERE is a catch Growth has been dichotomous Disparities have grown since independence This is true whether measured in income terms or wealth terms or taken in regional terms A high-wage island has emerged amongst labour with the organised sector gaining rapidly while those constituting the unorganised sector have fallen behind The share of organised sector has increased in national income at almost constant employment The large-scale sector has expanded faster than the small-scale sector The rich have typically gained faster than the non-rich This is specially true if the substantial black economy is also accounted for Data on this are presented in the Alternative Budget (Kumar, 1994)

Subsistence is socially determined changing over space and time so that deprivation is relative Thus, the definition of material poverty is ever changing What is needed to survive in Tamil Nadu is very different from that needed in the hills, say, in Ladakh The minimum necessary for survival for a slum dweller in Bombay is different than that required in a village of UP The definition of necessities changes over time, for instance, minimum requirements of transportation, clothing, health and education are different as compared to what they were at the time of independence

Finally, the poor are not just those who are defined to be below a hypothetical subsistence level Even those who have an income level slightly higher than this level are materially poor but not officially recognised as such The feeling of relative deprivation amongst this section not officially recognised as the poor may be even higher than amongst the official poor In effect, dimensions of poverty in India are much larger than indicated by the official statistics

In brief, the dichotomous growth coupled with a rising requirement of subsistence has led to an increase in relative poverty in spite of rising per capita income and rising living standards in the country

There is a shift in the nature of poverty due to other factors First, the rising level of expectations and second, the increasing monetisation and commodification of goods While the former produces a psychological feeling of deprivation, the latter makes it more difficult to cope with poverty Earlier, many goods were available as free goods of nature and specially in the rural setting enabling even the unemployed and the underemployed to subsist Commodification has eliminated the free goods making poverty much more stark

The increasing penetration of markets into domains which were hitherto outside its scope has eliminated the individual's choice of remaining outside the market mechanism Say, as a peasant in a village or as a tribal Even social relationships, like, marriage and friendships are assessed in terms of gains and losses The poor are coercively involved in a one-way relationship with the markets, affected by its operations but unable to influence it or change it in any way

Markets cater to the purchasing power of the individual and not their needs Thus the poor lacking in purchasing power are marginal to the modern day economy They need a powerful entity like the State to counter the markets and their impact Thus, state intervention—even when it has been ineffective—is needed by the poor But 1991 marks a watershed, the poor are being jettisoned by the state since it has decided to curb its intervention in their favour

Where did We go Wrong?

THE above description of post-independence developments indicates that freedom has meant different things for different sections of Indians and specially for those who are marginal to the system The simple needs of the majority of the people remain unfulfilled While literacy figures may have touched 55 per cent, this is more on paper and effective literacy remains low Access to higher education remains limited Per thousand of population, India has one of the lowest numbers of people in higher education in the world

Availability of assured drinking water is on paper since even in major metropolitan centres, the water supply is polluted and those who can afford it are resorting to expensive private efforts while the poor are left to the mercy of the elements The decline in the quality of environment has led to new diseases and increase in the medical bills which the poor can ill-afford India totters from one disaster to next, from cholera to plague to dengue, etc

Clearly in the country the obvious does not happen Living in clean and sanitary conditions is more a matter of consciousness than of resources Why is primary education to all in a country, where there are 37 million educated unemployed registered on the rolls of the labour exchanges, a problem? Why is rural infrastructure in a country, where a bulk of the population in the rural areas is underemployed, a problem?

Apologists argue that there is a lack of resources But as the above indicates, the human and the material resources exist so that it is not a matter of resource shortage but of a lack of will Unfortunately, today activities like slum improvement, provision of drinking water and primary education are partly dependent on allocation of funds from abroad This has generated a psychology of dependency making the average man believe that there is a lack of resources Even the policy-maker who should know better gets trapped into believing this However, if there is a shortage it is of the will to do the needful to give these matters the priority they deserve

Even when resources are made available, policy has failed the poor miserably Money allotted and schemes started have not delivered to the poor Not only because of faulty conception but also because of policy failure due to corruption and diversion of funds This affects the poor both directly due to the failure of schemes meant for them but also indirectly through the process of failure of the development process If the development process had been able to deliver, specific schemes targetting the poor would have been redundant

The black economy has grown dramatically and is currently estimated conservatively to be of the order of Rs 5 lakh crores every year (much larger than the agricultural sector) It is concentrated in the hands of the top three per cent in the income ladder and affects every aspect of the nation's life It represents a concentration of income and wealth which adds to the burden on the poor It is the single biggest cause of the failure of policy which affects adversely the nation and specially the poor The resources pre-empted by it are adequate to eliminate the deprivation of the poor and for provision of the basic minimum to all, as brought out in the Alternative Budget (Kumar, 1994)

Growing Alienation, Loss of Credibility and Failure of Policy

TODAY, the tiny elite wielding power in the country is unconcerned about the poor since it is busy making money for itself (in black and white) and defending these gains It uses slogans to gather votes but the concern ends there Even the representatives of the poor cynically manipulate the cause of the poor to gain power and then dump them

Slogans like *garibi hatao*, 'right to work', 'clean government' and 'social justice' have been mere passages to power This is the big change since independence with the elite now cynically manipulative

The interest of the poor is not being served by the existing political parties and their leadership The alienation between the poor and the non-poor has grown further since independence The poor have responded to this in their own way Their political response is cynical, based on their own time-tested perceptions of caste, community and family Even criminals belonging to a group who can deliver power to the group through violence are preferable to the elite Criminals and corrupt elements have used this cynicism of the people to gain power everywhere The nation as an entity, never very strong in the perception of the poor, has weakened

Cynicism and criminalisation have further reduced the state's ability to deliver on policies The disbelief in dispensations from the official world is total A policy to be viable must be so considered all down the line Those formulating policy cannot be present at all stages of its implementation In an atmosphere of cynicism, the local level officials take advantage knowing that the public at large is not going to react The result is a widespread policy failure

NEP The Push for Markets and the Marginalisation of the Poor

THE elite are pushing for markets on the plea that policy failure in any case is not delivering to the poor Further, they are using the bogey of shortage of resources to push for globalisation The elite argue that even though the poor are marginal to the market, trickle down would benefit them The agenda of the elite is being pushed forward unabashedly since 1991 even though the argument is patently disingenuous

For basic needs the nation has not only had adequate resources, there is no need for foreign resources The non-elite who have been marginal to the market processes can only get further marginalised with global forces beginning to dominate the Indian markets These new forces which are not in control of the Third World governments and go around arm-twisting these governments cannot be expected to work for the interest of the poor The poor do not count in their reckoning due to their lack of purchasing power and absence of skills

Already employment generation policies have become secondary to attracting foreign capital and technology at massive concessions Indigenous concerns are becoming secondary to those of the international organisations like the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO For instance, if medicine prices rise dramatically or the interest of the poor farmers suffers due to the new WTO regime, where do the poor fit into the picture? The interest of the MNCs supersedes all else and India has to give in

A new international division of labour is emerging on the world scene with low and intermediate and polluting technologies relocating in the poorer nations and advanced and clean technology in the rich nations The Third World nations and its states are competing against each other in offering cheap labour to the world and relaxing environmental standards to gain investments This can only marginalise the poor further

Poverty is a state of the mind Above all, people are the resources of the nation This should neither be wasted nor demoralised South Korea and Japan demonstrate that natural resource shortage does not come in the way of rapid economic development

The New Economic Policies and Globalisation have come packaged as a part of the conservative ideology that markets are 'efficient' Even in the literature of this genre, this is only true in an ideal world and not in the world as it exists Market failure is the large reality of modern-day economies and yet it is ignored to push for the interest of the elite and international capital The debate is one-sided and a result of the developments in the world arena in the last two decades, the more recent demise of any competing ideology The poor have to fight this uni-polarity and pose alternatives

Conclusion

THE above analysis suggests that poverty is endemic in India fifty years after it gained political independence This is true in spite of substantial material progress (see Tables) on the average because the growth process has been dichotomous A small elite has cornered most of the gains leaving little for the rest and the nature of poverty has altered with the penetration of markets It was pointed out that the failure of policy is a cause of continuing poverty and the reason why now progressive policies are being jettisoned in favour of *laissez-faire*, the rule of the markets In turn, these have caused growing alienation of the non-elite and rising cynicism which make the task of governance of a vast and heterogeneous country difficult for the elite

In the fiftieth year of independence, the poor are being eclipsed from the consciousness of the elite

Rather than redoubling the efforts at making the obvious happen and achieving the tryst with destiny, the poor are being formally relegated to the background

In 1947 power was transferred to the Indian elite, alienated from the average citizen This elite was aspiring for modernisation It wanted to root out the superstitious and traditional mind-set of the people But, its alienation from the people prevented it from understanding how to go about this process The same police, the bureaucracy, the judiciary which it saw as modernising and which were instruments of control of people remained in place These institutions without change were supposed to transform themselves into forces of development and allies of the people Internal dynamism remained subjugated to foreign institutions and ideas

Ideas were imported from abroad since they were not internally being generated and in any case the West was the symbol of modernisation, the new *mantra* In brief, freedom in 1947 was partial since it was elitist in content and placed control in the hands of an elite which was strongly outward-looking and not very dynamic in the Indian context No conspiracy theory is being suggested here but that this elite had at best a limited vision which could not cope with the complexity of India and the processes let loose It is over time that this elite has become cynically manipulative and accepted the dichotomous growth of the economy

An alienated elite, with a narrowing horizon and dependent for ideas on others is also unable to retain a coherence Inevitably, conflict amongst the elite grew in society but this instead of benefiting the poor further marginalised them The dilemma is if the elite were united, they would have been able to more easily exploit the poor but even in their disunity, they have marginalised the poor through their control over the instruments of power and mutual coalitions They are against the poor if not explicitly, through the economic mechanisms they have set up

The system coopts those who gain power Witness the forces of social justice or the Dalit groups who are playing the system for their narrow individual gains and not for the groups they are supposed to represent The dilemma is how to separate the issues from the individuals and get the poor mobilised Democratic consciousness must rise to prevent individuals from derailing and hijacking movements

Chances of an orderly change are now minimal since the system has lost its credibility and people have no patience left Issues get hijacked in the surcharged atmosphere Those in favour of moderation get mistaken for those who are status quoists The resulting chaos is not even in the best interest of the elite Even their progress is halted by a non-performing system

Poverty is also a state of the mind of an elite with a narrow selfish vision for itself This needs to be countered If change is to be accomplished in the best interest of the nation as a whole, and hope for it lies in the growing democratic consciousness, its minimum components need to be

1 To make people the focus of policies rather than give unthinking primacy to man-made institutions, like markets, or policies like on technology and investments The concerns of people need to be the central focus There is a need to empower the poor to govern their destinies
2 To strengthen democracy To create a sense of social justice amongst all sections This will restore credibility of the system and enable policy to perform
3 Right to information
4 Right to (productive) employment
5 Frontal attack on the black economy and criminalisation

The Alternative Budget (Kumar, 1994), a vehicle for alternative policies, was drafted keeping these parameters in mind Those who are supposed to be fighting on behalf of the poor would need to have a long-term agenda and may have to resist the temptation of being coopted into the power structure for short-term gains Indeed the programme proposed above is a tall order, it is a vision of a civilised and equal society but nothing less would do as far as the poor are concerned as the developments of the last fifty years indicate ■

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Communal Challenge to Free India

Some Reminiscences and Reflections

D R GOYAL

For a person nurtured in the RSS culture it was not possible to share the euphoria touched off by the advent of independence All the more so in Punjab which was bearing the brunt of partition

I did not belong to that part of Punjab which became part of Pakistan but I had been reading newspapers which first gave expression to the anxiety that gripped the Hindus in that area As the historic day approached expression of anxiety gave place to tales of horror, of murder and rape and kidnapping Then followed train-loads of refugees who confirmed that what had appeared in newspapers was not only true but only part of a much more grim reality In the circle in which I moved, that is, the RSS group, there was no mention of the heroic efforts of these who retained their human conscience in the midst of that beastly frenzy

Imagination thus overheated, I as well as my colleagues further exaggerated whatever we heard or read in newspapers Our anti-Muslim sentiment, till then based on speeches and stories heard in the RSS *shakha*, was inflamed into a furious thirst for revenge Senior leaders of the Sangh encouraged us to form groups for killing Muslims so that the land that was India could be cleared of potential enemies and fifth columnists

I participated in such actions in my home town Moga and in neighbouring Ludhiana No heroic deeds these but shameful, cowardly acts which would not find approval of any sane person My mother, illiterate and totally ignorant of any kind of politics or political ideas, cursed those who indulged in those orgies She did not know that I was one of them Nor was she aware that it was happening on a large scale An ordinary housewife in a lower middle-class household, for her the world did not exist beyond the neighbourhood She cursed because the cowherd, Gama, a Muslim, who had tended our cows, had been killed

The author, who formerly taught in Kirorimal College, University of Delhi, was the erstwhile editor of Mainstream *He has played a vital role against Hindu communalism through the vehicle of Mrs Subhadra Joshi's Sampradayikta Virodhi Committee He also edits* Secular Democracy

In Ludhiana, besides wayside stabbings, we concentrated on frightening away the family of Maulana Habibur Rehman He was a nationalist, a Gandhian, a leading light of Jamiat-Ulama Hind His persistent stay was a message to Muslims that they must stay put Ludhiana, we thought, would not be cleared of the 'pest' as long as he was there and given police protection because he was close to Gandhi and Nehru The local bureaucracy and police was not bothered much about what happened to others but any harm to the Maulana would bring upon them the wrath of the Prime Minister Therefore, we thought of creating a situation in which the officials concerned may be justified in forcibly taking the family out as a rescue operation

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THE madness did not last long As a full-time RSS *pracharak* before that I had been questioning leaders about the shape that the *Hindu Rashtra* would take, how it would solve the problems of the people, whether the departure of the British would mean independence and, if not, what steps were contemplated to realise our dream Not having got any satisfactory answers and having witnessed the hypocrisy about claims of high moral character, I had already taken up a job in Ludhiana as the editor of an Urdu weekly, *Sandesh*, run by a Hindu Mahasabha leader

Unable to sustain enthusiasm about the murders and mayhem I thought of leaving Ludhiana and boarded a refugee train to Delhi where I landed up in the Hindu Mahasabha Bhawan I got a job in an Urdu daily, *Sangram*, which was a venomous communal sheet and was banned by the government In the Hindu Sabha Bhawan I came in contact with people who talked in terms of establishing a *Hindu Rashtra* by eliminating from the Indian scene the 'anti-Hindu' trio of Gandhi, Nehru and Azad

How full were minds like mine with hatred of these people I shudder to recall now I had got a job as a sub-editor with the daily Hindi *Milap* where I was given the duty to report Gandhi's speeches at his daily prayer meetings I dared not refuse the assignment for fear of losing the job but reported the speeches by listening to the radio broadcast I had a feeling that seeing his face would be a kind of pollution The day he was assassinated I was told by some people in the Bhawan that I must attend Gandhi's prayer meeting in person because something historic was to happen However, the foul deed was already accomplished before I could arrive at Birla House I heard about it from people at the corner of Aurangzeb Road and returned to the office

Awareness of the world around and interaction with journalists shattered the secure unquestioning certainty I had imbibed in the RSS days It had weakened earlier but the new awareness created curiosity to know more. Another experience, after Gandhi's murder, further demolished the make-believe world Arrested on suspicion of involvement in a conspiracy to assassinate Jawaharlal, I happened to be lodged in Delhi District Jail in a barrack in which HMS leaders, V G Deshpande and Mahant Digvijay Nath of Gorakhpur were kept They got from outside all kinds of delicacies, ate the best food and spent most of the time in gossip Their food I could relish but not their gossip I got books from the jail library to spend my time During the month I spent before release I read Urdu translations of Duma's *L'Miserables*, Prince Kropotkin's *Problem of Bread* and *What is Marxism* by Emile Burns That opened a new world for me

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OUT of prison I began to keep company with leaders of the Students' Federation, as alongwith my job, I had resumed studies in college The big change came when I came in contact, after an inter-college debate, with Dr K M Ashraf I had more opportunity to interact with him when I became a lecturer in K M College where Dr Ashraf was a senior member of the staff I was on the lookout for a political outfit which would be different from the RSS and opposed to the Congress, hatred against which I still retained, a residue of my RSS days The CPI was what, I thought, I was looking for Dr Ashraf encouraged me to join it but purged my mind of anti-Gandhi and anti-Nehru prejudice.

Despite the pervasive anti-Congressism of the CPI, I was inclined more to such activity as would save the people from the poison that the RSS was injecting It was somewhat disappointing to note that none of the secular parties, despite their anti-communal rhetoric, was taking up cudgels against the RSS The way Golwalkar discarded his non-political veneer at the time of the India-China conflict of 1962 and strutted about the national stage spewing venom against Jawaharlal Nehru gave me a feeling that the people must be made aware of the danger the RSS posed Never throughout the period when the people were waging a gruelling struggle against British imperialism did he stir out of his non-political cocoon Rather he used to preach that to be anti-British cannot be considered a mark of patriotism The same Golwalkar was now equating patriotism with anti-Nehruism and the monopoly press seemed to be one with him

Mrs Subhadra Joshi, then a prominent Congress Member of Parliament, had attracted national attention when she defeated Atal Behari Vajpayee in the parliamentary election Before that she had conducted a determined struggle against communal elements in Jabalpur where the first major riot had occurred after the partition killings I, therefore, joined her campaign in the late sixties

Jawaharlal Nehru was an unremitting critic of the communal ideology, of the Muslim League variety before independence and of the RSS-Jana Sangh brand after 1947 His seemed to be a one-man crusade because the conduct of his party did not match it, even though he exhorted his partymen not to neglect the danger As a result after his demise there was a vacuum in this context Mrs Joshi alone had thought of organised combat by setting up the Sampradayikta Virodhi Committee after the 1962 elections

The Committee made a big impact in the decade 1965-75 when it exposed the RSS hand in the major riots that occurred during that period It sent investigating teams to the riot-affected areas, got help and succour for the victims, published literature and held numerous seminars and conferences to build up an anti-communal temper

In all this there was encouragement and patronage from Prime Minister Indira Gandhi It proved both a positive and a negative factor Many people flocked to it and provided it support more because of Mrs Joshi's perceived closeness to the Prime Minister than for the intrinsic national value of her campaign It created an illusion in the Committee that it had succeeded in developing the desired temper and atmosphere That it should take advantage of the situation to build its independent cadre never occurred to its leadership and it remained satisfied with its catalyst role in bringing together all non-communal parties and groups for the campaign

The illusion broke when during the Emergency Mrs Gandhi changed her attitude under the influence of Sanjay and Mrs Joshi fell out with her In the new political strategy of concentrating on the Hindu majority Mrs Gandhi saw no place and no use for Mrs Joshi and her Committee In other words, she considered it only an instrument to woo the Muslim electorate and not an agency to promote secular and scientific temper As the message went round of the soured relationship, most of its supporters and adherents, the bulk of whom belonged to Congress party, stopped associating both with Mrs Joshi and the Sampradayikta Virodhi Committee

Near-exclusive pre-occupation of political parties with electoral politics tends to render values like secularism and social justice into mere vote-gathering gimmicks and people begin to lose faith in all claims in respect of them Particularly when they see secular parties joining hands with parties and groups they declare communal as happened in 1967, 1977, 1989 and 1991 Or when avowedly secular parties are seen to adopt the communal agenda, as the Congress did between 1977 and 1996

The two decades during which the success graph of the RSS-sponsored political formation, Jana Sangh or BJP, has registered a rising curve is the period when this phenomenon has been most manifest The resurgence of the *Hindutva* forces is mainly due to this factor although other factors have also contributed The tendency among political analysts to project the idea that in view of the electoral clout of parties like the BJP, Shiv Sena, Akali Dal and Muslim League the attitude of treating them as untouchables is irrelevant or invalid democratically tantamounts to capitulation It shows the bankruptcy of thought on the part of such think-tanks Impressed by the spectacle of electoral success and high pressure propaganda of communalist outfits they fail to dig deeper into the ground realities

It is hardly recognised that as long as it was frontally challenged and its sinister nature exposed in public the electoral support of the BJP (or the Jana Sangh earlier) never reached the double figure percentage in terms of electoral support In 1996 also, when it was supposedly isolated, the barrage of criticism was directed mainly against Narasimha Rao and the Congress Even on the score of demolition of Babri Masjid Of course, Narasimha Rao had many things to answer for, including his failure, as the leader of the ruling political party, to perform his duty of making people aware of the sinister nature of these outfits and even to convince his own partymen about his commitment to secularism

With its strong sub-conscious tendency to worship the rising sun, our urban intelligentsia has made it a fashion to look for ingenious arguments to explain, and thus justify, the rise in the influence of the *Sangh Parivar* For this ample ammunition is churned out by the so-called centres of learning built by the Western imperialist countries The media, controlled by Indian and foreign vested interests, has become an instrument of spreading new shibboleths like 'clash of civilisations', rise of 'fundamentalism' with the same intensity that was witnessed in propagating the bogey of pan-Islamism in the inter-war years The post-independence generation of the secular nationalist segment also laps up this new demagogic phraseology without caring to understand its sinister import Never do these people ponder that if it were a reality then why there should be conflicts like Iran-Iraq or Saudi-Iran or Iraq-Syria or Morocco-Algeria

Instead of independently analysing developments the political and media elite fall for one or the other form of communal extremism, either of the RSS variety or the separatist minority tendency represented by various faces of Jamaat-e-Islami The inter-face gives a boost to both

The grossest example of this phenomenon was manifested in the handling of the Babri Masjid imbroglio during Rajiv Gandhi's time First the locks of the disputed structure were opened on specious grounds which was the virtual opening of the gates for mischief Thereafter busy-bodies went about trying to argue and bring about conciliation between the extremist antagonists, the Ram Janmabhoomi morcha and the Babri Masjid Action Committee Both at the official and non-official levels there was no serious attempt to mobilise public opinion on the basis of a democratic and scientific attitude on the issue The inevitable result was a deep communal divide Subsequently Narasimha Rao pursued the same course and did not realise the blunder even after December 6, 1992, even though popular revulsion against the deed was sufficient evidence that people at large do not approve either extreme

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At the ideological level protagonists of secular politics have signally failed to make a distinction between the Western concept of secularism found in dictionaries and encyclopaedias and the practical way of coexistence adopted in the Indian Constitution as freedom of conscience with the limitation that the freedom of any one community does not interfere with the freedom of the other It is neither negation of nor indifference to religion nor compulsion for equal respect for all Even Jawaharlal Nehru had cautioned that the expression 'secular' is the nearest

(Continued on page 32)

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INDIA AT FIFTY

The Dalit Situation

KUMAR SURESH

> *On the social plane, we have in India a society based on the principles of graded inequality which means elevation of some and degradation of others On the economic plane, we have a society in which there are some who have immense wealth as against many who live in abject poverty On the 26th January 1950, we are going to enter into a life of contradictions In politics we will have equality and in social and economic life we will have inequality In politics we will be recognising the principle of one man one vote and one vote one value In our social and economic life, we shall, by reason of our social and economic structure, continue to deny the principle of one man one value How long shall we continue to live this life of contradictions? How long shall we continue to deny equality in our social and economic life? If we continue to deny it for long, we will do so only by putting our political democracy in peril We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment or else those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy*
>
> —B R Ambedkar[1]

The contradictions of socio-economic order in India remain almost the same even after fifty years of independence Half a century is a considerable period of time in the history of a society, nation and state to correct its mistakes and imbalances, but even at the closing end of the twentieth century neither the society nor the state in India has been able to resolve its contradictions And despite the constitutional commitment of the post-colonial state towards the goal of equality, liberty and justice, the age-old structure of inequality has not been dismantled Social and economic inequality still occupies the centre-stage of Indian reality The ideals of social democracy and distributive justice, in their essence, remain elusive On the contrary, the vast majority of the Indian population is deprived socially, economically and educationally The social opportunities[2], offered by the state, are confined to the privileged sections of society The deprived and disadvantaged groups are still exposed to the experiences of "cumulative inequality" These marginalised groups have yet to experience the so-called fruits of development There is a vast gap between the population of the upper castes and the Dalits[3] (Scheduled Castes) who constitute more than 16 per cent of the Indian population The upwardly mobile Other Backward Castes have, of course, challenged the hegemonic structure of the Brahminical order and they have crystallised themselves as a major economic and political power in post-independent India But as far as the Dalit situation is concerned, no substantial change has taken place during the four decades of development planning They are still placed at the bottom of the socio-economic structure This situation not only exposes the hypocritical stance of the Indian state but also questions the very basis and model of development

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It is in this background that this paper examines the responses of the society and state in India during the past fifty years Though the exact data and figures are not available on different issues which could help us in assessing the real situation, some of the figures by government agencies, reports of newspapers, and participant observations may serve as points of reference Interestingly, the newly-constituted Commission for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes has not released its data on employment and socio-economic upliftment of the Dalits The cases of atrocities against them, violation of civil and human rights are the major human concerns and need the attention of the public but even on these issues, the government reports are not easily available And we are compelled to rely either on newspaper reports, old data or the reports of different citizens' fora such as PUCL, PUDR, etc

Here we limit ourselves to some of the basic areas of the affirmative actions of the state What has the post-colonial state in India done to the Dalits? Have they been able to come at par with the general population or are they still lagging behind in different realms? To what extent the state has been able to deliver socio-economic justice to them? Some of the available figures and data on their educational status, employment situation, economic upliftment, etc throw light on the developmental scenario and widening gap between the Dalits and the general population, including the OBCs The data related to the atrocity cases speak about the prevailing bias of the state and inegalitarian ethos of the society wherein the voices of protest, struggle for social dignity and justice are hardly tolerated This point gets validated in subsequent sections of analysis of the Dalit situation

TABLE 1
Atrocity Cases against SCs by the States and SC Population

S N	States/Atrocity Cases	*1977*	*1978*	*1979*	*1980*	*1981*	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*Yearly Average*	*Population Per Cent*
1	Andhra Pradesh											
	No	102	110	92	152	206	213	181	196	166	157	7 6
	Per cent	0 9	0 7	0 7	1 1	1 5	1 4	1 2	1 1	1 1	1 1	—
2	Bihar											
	No	681	1911	2153	1890	1983	2073	1809	1845	1402	1750	9
	Per cent	6 3	12 7	15 6	13 8	14 0	13 8	12 2	11 1	9 3	12 2	—
3	Gujarat											
	No	331	540	475	498	654	455	476	690	750	541	2 3
	Per cent	3 0	3 6	3 4	3 6	4 6	3 0	3 2	4 2	5 0	3 8	—
4	Haryana											
	No	26	66	80	78	74	144	113	120	117	91	2 4
	Per cent	0 2	0 4	0 6	0 6	0 5	1 0	0 8	0	0 8	0 6	—
5	Himachal Pradesh											
	No	42	66	83	68	69	73	47	56	49	61	1 0
	Per cent	0 4	0 4	0 6	0 5	0 5	0 5	0 3	0 3	0 3	0 4	—
6	Karnataka											
	No	59	376	500	377	397	363	194	169	294	303	5 3
	Per cent	0 5	2 5	3 6	2 7	2 8	2 4	1 3	1 0	2 0	2 1	—
7	Kerala											
	No	233	767	887	478	260	145	149	148	300	374	2 4
	Per cent	2 1	5 1	6 4	3 5	1 8	1 0	1 0	0 9	2 0	2 6	—
8	Madhya Pradesh											
	No	3366	3240	3866	3877	4033	4749	5292	6128	4890	4382	7 0
	Per cent	31 0	21 5	27 9	28 2	28 5	31 7	35 7	37 0	32 6	30 6	—
9	Maharashtra											
	No	570	1053	503	218	695	680	704	579	428	637	4 3
	Per cent	5 2	7 0	3 6	3 8	4 9	4 5	4 8	3 5	2 9	4 4	—
10	Orissa											
	No	69	135	43	80	80	150	46	46	159	90	3 7
	Per cent	0 6	0 9	0 3	0 6	0 6	3 0	0 3	0 3	1 1	0 6	—
11	Punjab											
	No	84	84	171	79	51	73	36	47	32	73	4 3
	Per cent	0 8	0 6	1 2	0 6	0 4	0 5	0 2	0 3	0 2	0 5	—
12	Rajasthan											
	No	261	886	760	1180	1562	1731	1604	1648	1437	1230	5 6
	Per cent	2 4	5 9	5 5	8 6	11 0	11 5	10 8	9 9	9 6	8 6	—
13	Tamil Nadu											
	No	54	141	115	140	199	153	299	689	841	292	8 5
	Per cent	0 5	0 9	0 8	1 0	1 4	1 0	2 0	4 2	5 6	2 0	—
14	Uttar Pradesh											
	No	4974	5660	4102	4279	3865	3977	3851	4200	4135	4338	22 4
	Per cent	45 8	37 6	29 7	31 2	27 3	26 5	26 0	25 3	27 5	30 3	—
15	West Bengal											
	No	7	6	2	33	23	17	17	18	11	15	11 5
	Per cent	0 1	0 0	0 0	0 2	0 2	0 1	0 1	0 1	0 1	0 1	—
Total												
	No	10,859	15,041	13,832	13,727	14,151	14,996	14,818	16,573	15,011	14,334	98 0
	Per cent	100 0	100 0	100 0	100 0	100 0	100 0	100 0	100 0	100 0	100 0	—

Note Population percentage as per 1981 census

Source Adapted from P Radhakrishnan, "Ambedkar's Legacy to Dalits Has the Nation Reneged on its Promises?", *Economic and Political Weekly,* Vol XXVI, No 33, pp 1911-22

Dalit and the Affirmative Action of the State

As pointed out earlier, the Dalits (Scheduled Castes) constitute about 16 48 per cent of the total population according to the 1991 census of India Historically, they have remained at the bottom in the structured socio-economic inequality In order to realise the ideals of social justice, economic equity and social democracy, the Constitution prescribed the protection and safeguards for them either through the protective discrimination and preferential treatment or by way of insisting on their general rights as citizens with the object of promoting their educational and economic interests and removing social disabilities they are subjected to Some of the constitutional safeguards relating to Dalits include (i) abolition of untouchability and forbidding of its practice in any form (Article 17), (ii) preferential treatment in the matter of employment in public services (Articles 16 and 335), promotion of their education and economic interest and their protection from social injustice and all forms of exploitation (Article 46), their special representation in the Lok Sabha and the State Legislative Assemblies (Articles 330, 332 and 334) Apart from these specific provisions there are many other instances also where the state has to play a pivotal role in the protection and promotion of socio-economic interests and rights of these subordinated people But despite these constitutional obligations, the performance of the state in this regard is not very fair

Protection of Civil Rights and Atrocities against Dalits

THE large-scale violation of civil rights and human rights and atrocities against the Dalits have been on the rise over the years Table-1 indicates the intensity of the problem Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh account for more than 60 per cent of the cases of atrocities These States are also having a high concentration of Dalit population But interestingly the percentage of such cases in Bihar is lower than in UP and MP Even during the last one decade, the cases of atrocities have been more in UP, MP and Rajasthan than Bihar The major reason appears to be the growing consciousness among the Dalits in Bihar Their assertiveness and organisational strength in form of different Naxalite groups such as MCC, IPF, Party Unity, MKSS, etc has acted as a deterrent factor Their struggle for justice and social dignity has brought a situation where the perpetrators of violence appear to be apprehensive of the Dalit strength and power The sprawling caste senas are a testimony of the fact Though violence in any form cannot be justified, the Dalits in the parts of Bihar and Andhra Pradesh have resorted to the retaliatory method for the protection of their rights of life and liberty and their share in the economic resources In this context, Dr Ambedkar's oprojection in the final address to the Constituent Assembly appears to be true where he had pointed out that India even after independence is entering into a life of contradictions He had warned that if equality in economic and social life is denied for long, the political democracy would be put in peril and those who suffer from inequality would blow up the structure of political democracy The large-scale violence in different parts of India, and especially the Naxal violence in Bihar and Andhra Pradesh, have challenged the structure of political democracy In many cases the people have lost their faith in the structure of the state and its interventionist role in achieving the goal of equality, liberty and justice, and as a protector of rights There has been, of course, a parallel stream of democratic consciousness in search of an alternative within the available structure

Economic and Educational Upliftment of the Dalits

ECONOMIC and educational upliftment of the Dalits is one of the major areas of concern of the state but even in this regard the record of the state is not satisfactory The Dalits are still far behind the general population in terms of literacy and education The literacy percentage (see Table 2) clearly highlights the prevailing gap The majority of the Dalits are not even able to read and write Then in what way would the process of globalisation help them which calls for a high degree of specialisation, professional degree, skill and training? Only a section of the Dalit population can afford to invest in the professional degree and training The paradox of equality of opportunity and equality of results remains unresolved R H Tawney's sharp observation about the gap between the equality of opportunity and equality of results appears to be valid if it is applied in the case of the post-independent Indian situation The majority of the Dalits do not complete even their primary education Even the students who are enrolled in the schools do not attend their classes They are engaged either as child labour wage workers or as non-wage domestic workers The percentage of drop-outs among them is very high Almost 80 per cent of the SC students drop out even before they could complete their Class X study It is logically extended that those children who are out of the schools constitute the labour force [4]

TABLE 2
Literacy Percentage of Scheduled Castes vs General Population

Sl No	States/ Categories	1961	1971	1981
1	Andhra Pradesh			
	SCs	8 5	10 7	17 7
	General	21 5	24 6	29 9
2	Bihar			
	SCs	6 0	6 5	10 4
	General	18 4	19 9	26 2
3	Gujarat			
	SCs	22 5	27 7	39 8
	General	30 5	35 8	43 7
4	Himachal Pradesh			
	SCs	8 5	18 8	31 5
	General	17 1	32 0	42 5
5	Karnataka			
	SCs	9 1	13 9	20 6
	General	25 4	31 5	38 5
6	Kerala			
	SCs	24 4	40 2	56 0
	General	46 8	60 4	70 4
7	Madhya Pradesh			
	SCs	7 9	12 5	19 0
	General	17 1	22 4	27 9
8	Maharashtra			
	SCs	15 8	25 3	35 6
	General	29 8	39 2	47 2
9	Orissa			
	SCs	11 6	15 6	22 4
	General	21 7	26 2	32 2
10	Rajasthan			
	SCs	6 4	9 1	14 0
	General	15 2	19 1	24 4
11	Tamil Nadu			
	SCs	14 7	21 8	29 7
	General	31 4	39 5	46 8
12	Uttar Pradesh			
	SCs	7 1	10 2	15 0
	General	17 6	21 7	27 2
13	West Bengal			
	SCs	13 6	17 8	24 4
	General	29 3	33 2	40 9
	All India			
	SCs	**10 3**	**14 7**	**21 4**
	General	**24 0**	**29 5**	**36 2**

Source Adapted from P Radhakrishnan, "Ambedkar's Legacy to Dalits Has the Nation Reneged on its Promises?", *Economic and Political Weekly,* Vol XXVI, No 33, pp 1911-22

So far as college and university education is concerned the representation of the Dalits is not up to the mark Despite preferential treatment as a part of the affirmative action of the state, the majority of the Dalits do not afford higher education A variety of reasons are responsible for this state of affairs The initial background and historical handicaps appear to be negative factors which do not provide space for positive motivation towards the attainment of academic excellence and educational advancement The caste-class bias and prejudices of the academic environment further reinforces a sense of relative deprivation resulting in the withdrawal syndrome Something positive could have been done with the active and intervening role of the state through its innovative and supportive stance but it has not happened As a consequence the stipulated goal of educational advancement of the Dalit has not been realised

Similarly in the field of economic upliftment of the Dalit, the record of the state is again dismal A majority of them are still below the poverty line This fact is attested by both governmental and non-governmental statistics and data Most of them are menial workers engaged in both the organised and unorganised sectors They constitute the major agricultural workforce, for even today a majority of them are landless agricultural workers Very few are landholders and marginal farmers Apart from agriculture, they provide the major labour force to other sectors also The incidence of child labour is very high among the Dalits

The employment of the Dalits in white collar jobs and public services is another area of concern of the state The available data, figures and statistics reveal that the protective discrimination and preferential treatment of the Dalits as a matter of policy and commitment of the state has not been kept and carried out during the last fifty years The representation of the Dalits in the Central services is an important pointer in this regard Table 3 clearly indicates the unsatisfactory performance of the state The figures and percentage show that about 50 per cent of the sweepers, employed in the Central Government services, come from these groups, for it is polluting for the twice-born Hindu castes On the other hand, the Dalits somehow manage to get the government job of sweepers The representation of the Dalits in the lower posts is higher than the upper cadre posts And despite the policy of reservation, only 10 25 per cent in group 'A' services and 12 06 per cent in group 'B' services come from the Dalit background If this situation prevails in the Central Government services, one can easily assess the case in State services, in public sector undertakings and in other private sector jobs

TABLE 3
Representation of Scheduled Castes in Central Government Services

(As on January 1, 1994)

Group	Total	SCs	Percentage
A	59,016	6046	10 25
B	1,03,198	12,443	12 06
C	23,81,613	3,74,758	15 73
D (excluding sweepers)	10,23,285	2,09,423	20 46
Sweepers	2,25,359	1,10,569	49 06
Total (excluding sweepers)	35,67,112	6,02,670	16 90

Source *India 1995* (Publications Division, Government of India, New Delhi, 1996)

But despite the shortcomings and limitations of the affirmative action of the state the Dalits have been able to forge an independent identity in its various forms and manifestations The growing sense of awareness and assertiveness among them have brought them together on many common platforms They are now able to express and articulate their common Dalit identity through collective communicative action The available structure of political democracy has provided them appropriate space to express their sense of subalturnity and Dalitness This sense of subalturnity questions the structure of socio-economic inequality and reminds the state of its constitutional commitments This situation puts the whole paradigm of nation and state-building in post-independent India under serious scrutiny and calls for a radical shift in the paradigm which could provide accommodating space for the deprived sections of society

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1 Dr B R Ambedkar's final address to the Constituent Assembly Quoted in Justice VR Krishna Iyer, *Dr Ambedkar and the Dalit Future*, B R Publishing Corporation, Delhi, 1990, p 21

2 In their excellent account of economic development and social opportunities in independent India, Dreze and Sen have pointed to the prevailing gap between the constitutional goal and the policies of the government The record of the government with regard to the formation of social capital, especially relating to the Dalits is dismal See Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen, *India Economic Development and Social Opportunity*, Oxford Paperbacks, New Delhi, 1996

3 The term Dalit is used to refer to the vast population of India who are socially and economically deprived In the present context, however, it refers to the population of 'Scheduled Castes' These castes have suffered the stigma of untouchability in India for centuries

4 See Myron Weiner, "Child Labour in India Putting Compulsory Education on the Political AGenda", *Economic and Political Weekly*, November 6-16, 1996, pp 3007-14

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Quo Vadis *Bharat—Some Reflections*

K CHANDRAMOULI

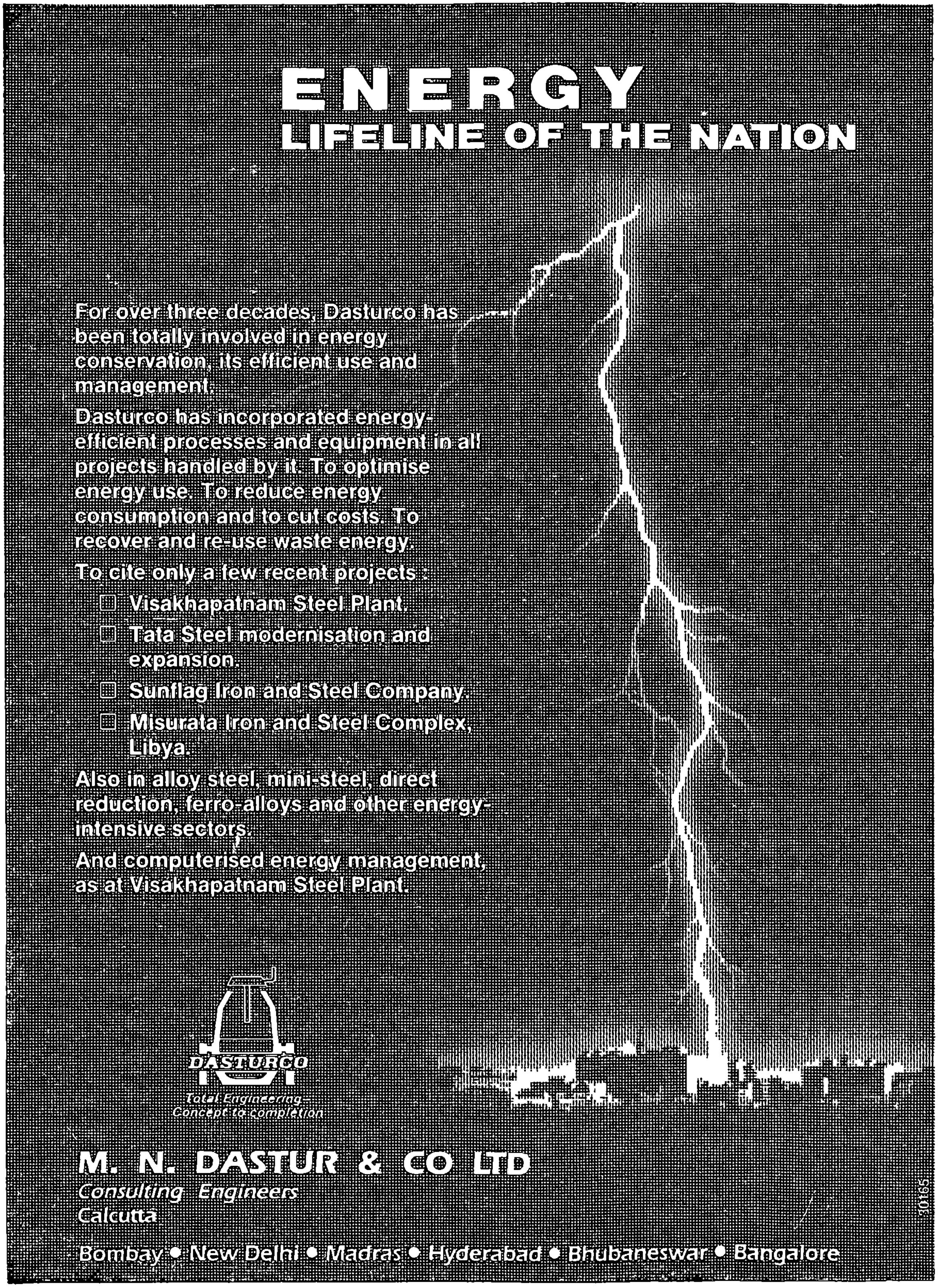
The tryst with destiny has landed us fifty years later into a tryst with the density of corruption, high self-esteem, goondaism pervading politics and a scramble to get into the Guinnes Book of World Records in every unsavoury area of nepotism, parochialism and provincialism parading as nationalism, also casteism deteriorating into BCs sitting over SCs, having pushed aside FCs from plum positions How to get into the tower of power, by hook or crook, is the only thought, night and day, pervading the minds of the denizens of this country

Churchill may be proved right when he said with foresight that the country is being handed over to crooks, ruffians and the like by the British Crown Our country's Constitution can be subverted internally, innocuously, by the very children of Bharat Mata A Law Minister wishing to put up his wife as a Judge in a High Court, a Chief Minister setting up his wife as the proxy Chief Minister, a bull trying to get into the Rashtrapati Bhavan to render it into a China shop or calling the three Service Chiefs to obey as the supreme commander to bring in another Hitlerite regime—all these are fall-outs of self-assessment *sans* humility, truthfulness and disrespect of whatever is still left of divinity and the immanence thereof

Many more fertile poetic thoughts may find expresion but whatever has been said is enough to prick the conscience of any right-thinking citizen to stop, hearken the still small voice within and go ahead in his own humble way in a tribute to the Father of the Nation who is remembered in almost all cities as 'M G Road' Godse shot him, and now nobody has time even to spell out his name in full lest it should become another *naam* like *ram naam*

If democracy is subverted—alas, Bharat, you yourself will have to be blamed Even divinity will forsake you, for you are the neo-prodigals not worth a turnaround! ■

The author a senior Advocate of the Supreme Court of India He was also the Joint Registrar of the Supreme Court (from which post he was has retired)



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Planning for the Poor : A Retrospective Reflection

M A OOMMEN

In his historic 'tryst with destiny' speech made on the eve of India's independence, Jawaharlal Nehru reminded the nation in no unequivocal terms that "the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity" is the basic task of nation-building that lies ahead This was certainly not an impromptu statement made casually In fact, the Indian national movement was nurtured almost exclusively on the fundamental issue of poverty, and the political economy underlying it

> The foundation of political nationalism and mass agitation during the post-war period (1919-47) had been laid in the form of an impressive corpus of published work, council speeches, Indian National Congress debates and press dissemination, all of which concentrated on a single theme—India's poverty and its roots [T V Sathyamurthy (1983), p 93]

Although the national and international setting has undergone a sea-change during the last fifty years, the issue of poverty remains alive and more poignant than ever before, not only because of the sheer increase in numbers, but also due to the growing affluence of the privileged few This paper is in the nature of a retrospective reflection The implicit hypothesis we propose to advance is that the political leadership as well as the intelligentsia, in particular the tribe of economists, have failed the people in building a good society

From Planning to Tigerisation

In the early years of planning, poverty was perceived as a comprehensive social phenomenon by both the economists and the Indian National Congress on whom fell the historic task of fighting it Democratic planning was the means chosen to achieve the task A careful reading of the first three Five-Year Plans shows adequate recognition of the fact that mass poverty can be tackled only as (a) a part of a development strategy which internalises the pursuit of equity with the process of growth, supported by a radical policy framework which calls for institutional reforms, and (b) fighting poverty is inextricably linked with fighting inequality in income, wealth and social and economic opportunities

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Looking back, I think two implicit assumptions of the planners and those at the helm of affairs at the time of independence, and in the years immediately following, need to be mentioned, so as to put the discussion in its proper perspective One, that the civil service, police, judiciary, the army and the steel framework designed to protect a colonial empire is equally suited to carry forward the developmental challenges of the new government Two, the fledgling democracy has the political sagacity and resilience as well as the institutional and social ethos to ensure the necessary people's participation to carry forward the mission This is not to ignore the fact that India, at independence, was a sort of clay putty in the hands of Nehru, to shape it the way he wanted

Though the First Five-Year Plan (1951-56) clearly noted that the urge to plan and change the social and economic conditions came "from the fact of poverty and of inequalities in income, wealth and opportunity" [GOI (1951), p 8)], real planning starts only with the Second Five-Year Plan (1956-61) In tune with the Bombay Plan (1944) and the Mahalanobis model, a capital-intensive strategy of industrialisation was set out However, stressing the need to "combine development with reduction in economic and social inequality" the Second Five-Year Plan outlined a series of measures from land reforms to progressive taxation towards that goal [See GOI (1956), ch 2] The Second Plan, in fact, has an excellent chapter on 'Land Reform and Agrarian Reorganisation' which outlines the basis of a more egalitarian agrarian structure The Third Plan was in effect a continuation of the Second Nehru, in the first chapter of the Third Plan,[1] reaffirmed the close links between poverty and inequality and recalled that the Indian Constitution adopted in 1950 (quoting extensively from the Directive Principles of State Policy) with its commitment to a socialist pattern of society and planned development "had its roots deep in India's struggle for freedom" [Planning Commission (1992), p 2] Subsequent events clearly show that this concern of Nehru for a midcourse correction had not been carried out

That a general election (1971) in India was fought, and won with a huge majority, on the single slogan of *'garibi hatao'* (banish poverty) was symptomatic of the people's expectations Lack of people's mandate could no longer be invoked to explain inaction Emboldened by this political background in January 1973 the Planning Commission published an Approach Paper to the Fifth Plan 1974-79 The technical exercise on which the Approach Paper was based was also published by the Planning Commission [See Planning Commission 1973 (a) and 1973 (b)] Of all the Plan Approach Papers, the Fifth Plan Paper stands out easily as the most straightforward and significant in terms of specifying poverty as the most important objective and outlining a strategy, without just staying in the realm of rhetoric In the words of the Fifth Plan Approach Paper

> The existence of poverty is incompatible with the vision of an advanced, prosperous, democratic, egalitarian and just society In fact, it holds a potential threat to the unity, integrity and independence of the country Elimination of poverty must, therefore, have the highest priority [Planning Commission 1973 (a), p 1]

Looking back now a quarter of a century after the Approach Paper was published, we cannot but help feel that the social upheaval that goes on in several parts of the country is primarily due to the basic failure to appreciate this fact

The Fifth Plan Approach Paper and the *Technical Note* thereof are the first ever (and probably the only one at that) documents that demonstrated that the various objectives of planning, namely growth, reduction in inequality and poverty, and self-reliance can be combined in an integrated fashion As the Approach Paper to the Fifth Plan observes

> An important finding from the exercise is that reduced inequality in consumption expenditure leads to a total reduction in the demand for imports This lends support to the hypothesis that a part of the requirement for aid stems from a pattern of consumption weighted in favour of the more affluent sections Self-reliance, just as removal of poverty, calls for redistribution of consumption in favour of the low income groups Correspondingly, any elitist orientation of the production pattern for consumer goods has to give way to emphasis on production of articles of mass consumption [Planning Commission 1973 (a), p 21]

These are significant observations and clearly not palatable to the elitist class, be they politicians or economists The Draft Five-Year Plan based on the Approach was quickly formulated It was approved by the National Development Council in December 1973 A detailed policy framework, including those for preventing the generation of black money, was formulated According to this policy package a substantial part of the resources for the Plan had to be raised from the rural rich through higher land revenue, taxation of agricultural income, etc , besides the urban rich It included drastic steps like socialisation of urbanisable land A wide range of support measures such as the Minimum Needs Programme, land reforms, reform of cooperatives, Panchayati Raj Institutions, etc were also suggested Despite all these, or probably because of that, almost every economist opposed the Draft Five-Year Plan on some ground or the other No economist came forward with feasible alternatives to salvage the Plan 'If you want to kill a dog, call it mad'—this appeared to be the motivating adage

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It was a long journey from the Draft Fifth Plan to the Final Plan The Plan was radically revised and finally approved by the National Development Council only in September 1976 In the meantime on July 1, 1975 the so-called Twenty-Point Programme[2] was launched by the then Prime Minister The main aim of such programmes, according to a political scientist in York University, was

> to anaesthetise the poor, while seeking to readjust the balance of economic power between the rural rich and industrial capital [T V Sathyamurthy (1983), p 105]

The Twenty-Point Programme sounded the death knell for the integrated development strategy towards fighting poverty The era of a targeted approach to the poor came into being This brought in its wake the ironic situation whereby policies designed towards accelerating growth were consistent with and usually enhanced inequity Although the Ninth Plan (1997-2002) Approach Paper is emphatic about eradication of poverty, it studiously avoids the question of equitable distribution of income, wealth and social and economic opportunities

Starting from 1980 [more specifically 1978 as IRDP (Integrated Rural Development) on a pilot basis was launched in that year], India witnessed a series of anti-poverty programmes (APPs) Broadly speaking , the APPs work through generating two types of employment self-employment and wage employment There are, of course, some social security schemes like National Social Assistance Programme and special programmes like MPs' Local Area Development Programmes Though all these are basically employment-oriented or security-based, they are essentially ad-hoc and not well designed or planned Several studies, besides expert committees, have evaluated the APPs and produced a vast volume of literature[3] It is not my purpose here to review these or add my own version of "wisdom" to it However, certain comments of a general nature which are relevant to the present discussion are noted below

First, the target approach (which is also the World Bank approach to poverty[4]) treats poverty as an individual's tragedy But as we have already affirmed, mass poverty has easily identifiable socio-economic roots and causes Around 350 million people of our country live in poverty, which works out to twenty times the population of Sri Lanka, nearly·three times that of Pakistan, and six times that of England and they cannot be regarded as a sum total of individual "tragedies"

True to the spirit of the target approach, the Sixth Plan speaks of progressively reducing 'the incidence of poverty', probably like eradicating or reducing the incidence of any epidemic or malaria through identifying the affected areas and families Attacking the symptom without addressing the underlying causes can, at best, only help to postpone the inevitable spread of the malaise and in fact be completely counter-productive

Second, at the operational level there is an evident lack of sincerity at all the stages of the APPs For example, the IRDP, which is the kingpin of the APPs is neither 'integrated' (sectorally or otherwise) nor related to rural development (as part of any local area plan, or district development strategy, etc).

The IRDP is a bureaucratic programme in which the innumerable steps involved, from identification of beneficiaries to marketing of products, are very demanding and indeed baffling If the cost of providing one rupee of APP services to the poor ranges from Rs 2 to Rs 7, what is the point of maintaining them at all? [See World Bank (1997), p 33] Subsidies have become the real rallying point where the views of various actors—from officers to bankers, beneficiaries and local politicians coincide Given the fact that except States like Kerala, most others have not constituted the District Planning Committee as per Article 243ZD, the question of reorienting the APPs in the direction of local development planning, following the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, seems to recede into the background

Third, since July 1991 we have entered an era of liberalisation and globalisation It is hoped that growth via 'uncaging of the tiger' will solve the problem of poverty Under the regime, investment priorities (whether investment should be in consumer goods or wage goods, motor cars or public transport, primary schools or hotel industry, etc), location of project (whether in the already developed metropolitan cities or in underdeveloped and drought prone areas, etc) are decided by the market, that is, by the preference pattern of those with the required investable funds and purchasing power APPs may continue during the interregnum to this market millennium, or as long as the ruling class finds it a politically advantageous tool for capturing and retaining power All the idealism of a just society has now been thrown overboard

Measurement of Poverty: A Serious Intellectual Exercise or a Cruel Joke on the Poor?

ALTHOUGH precision is the essence of efficient planning, an exact measurement of poverty is not a precondition for initiating action against poverty The poor are ubiquitous and massive enough to attract immediate solid action Who are the poor and where they are is also not unknown, as is well exemplified in the early Plan documents Of course, a precise measure is needed when the Plan strategy is to target programmes for them and monitor the progress or when it is proposed that their number becomes the norm for allocating "scarce" resources It may be said in all fairness that the ongoing effort towards measuring the poor is due to the "overwhelming concern" of the non-poor agencies and individuals for the poor Probably, measurement is most relevant when it is used as an indicator of the success or failure of development efforts over a period of time

The truth of the matter is that poverty has ceased to be important on the political agenda It has become purely a statistical and technical exercise for experts and planners to deal with The rhetoric, however, has been kept alive, as it has a tremendous appeal for the majority of the poverty-stricken vote-bank

Probably no other country has spent so much time, intellectual effort and resources for measuring poverty and estimating the number of the poor below the poverty line as did India Several working groups, task forces, expert committees besides individual economists have laboured in this search, a pursuit which still goes on unabated The first attempt to define the poverty line goes back to 1962 when a Working Group of eminent economists and social thinkers made a concerted effort They took into account the recommendations of the Nutrition Advisory Committee of the Indian Council of Medical Research regarding balanced diet, and proceeded with it An era of academic and official methodological search and estimation exercises followed It took nearly seventeen years for the Planning Commission (to be precise the Task Force on Projections of Minimum Needs and Effective Consumption Demand, Perspective Planning Division, January 1979) to settle for a per capita calorie norm for rural (2400 per day) and urban (2100 per day) areas and a basket of commodities that yielded the required calorie Finally the Task Force (1979) defined the poverty line (PL) as the per capita expenditure level (Rs 49 per month for rural and Rs 57 per month for urban areas) at which the calorie norms were met on the basis of all-India consumption basket for 1973-74

The PL naturally needed to be regularly updated to take into account price changes, and the choice of the relevant deflator, be it at the all-India level or State-level, becomes critical The Planning Commission, which published the official estimate of the population below the PL, till recently, followed two crucial steps First they used the implicit price deflator of private consumption estimated by the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) used in the National Accounts Statistics (NAS) The use of a single deflator across the board assumes that all regions and all consumers face the same price Second, finding discrepancy between the private consumption estimates of the NAS and NSS, the Planning Commission had adjusted the expenditure levels reported by the NSS uniformly across all expenditure classes (of the NSS) by a factor equal to the ratio of the total private consumption expenditure obtained from the NAS to that obtained from the NSS As the NAS estimate was invariably higher, this pegged the consumption level of the poor at a much higher level, merely by the stroke of a pen[1] The lower values are adjusted across all expenditure groups on the assumption that all expenditure groups have under-reported in the same proportion If consumption data from two sources show a divergence, the choice of the higher figure as more correct without explanation is clearly untenable

Despite all these known flaws, and alternate estimates made by a large number of economists, the Planning Commission continued with the conventional estimates as the official version According to the *Economic Survey 1995-96,*

> The proportion of people below the poverty line declined from 25 49 per cent in 1987-88 to 18 96 per cent in 1993-94
>
> The lower incidence of poverty in 1993-94, despite the intervening crisis of 1991-92, suggests that the various policies and programmes adopted in the process of economic reforms have helped the poor in the country [Government of India (GOI) (1996), p 13]

Obviously this is an exaggeration Interestingly, this "statistical scam" was done long after the Expert Group on Estimation of Proportion and Number of Poor (1993) submitted its report to the Planning Commission recommending the discontinuation of the data adjustment exercise and suggested a modified version The significance of this fact should be evident, and perhaps justify the characterisation of the "sleight of the hand" poverty eradication as motivated and mischievous

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THE gross underestimation of poverty, and related facts, in the official estimate is shown in Table 1 which compares the official estimate with the estimates by S P Gupta (1997) and the World Bank (1997) who have no reason to challenge the reform rationale

TABLE 1

Poverty Ratio Comparison of Official Estimate With Two Other Independent Estimates

Years	*Planning Commission's Official Statistics*	*S P Gupta Based on Expert Group Methodology*	*World Bank*
1987-88	25 49*	39 3	38 47
1990-91	—	35 5	35 49
1992	—	40 7	40 93
1993-94	18 96	35 6	35 04

* Based on old series of National Accounts Statistics Expert Group's estimated figure is 29 9

Source *Planning Commission (1993), S P Gupta (1997), and World Bank (1997)*

It may be noted that the absolute difference in numbers between the official estimate for 1987-88 and that based on the Expert Group methodology for the same year is around 75 million people and that for 1993-94 the difference between the official estimate and the World Bank estimate is nearly 150 million people This sort of poverty reduction is indeed a cruel joke on the poor Chandrasekhar and Sen (1996) have estimated that the number of the poor increased by over 60 million people in rural areas during the first 18 months of the Reform period They point out that (see also Table 1) although there is an appreciable moderation in poverty between 1992 and 1993-94 in both absolute and proportionate terms, there were 30 million *more* people living in poverty in rural India in 1993-94 [Chanderasekhar, C P and Sen, A (1996), p 102]

TABLE 2

*** Poverty in India 1951-1994 (with correction for CPI-AL)**

NSS Round	*Survey Period*	*HCI National*	*PGI National*	*SPGI National*
3	Aug 51-Nov 52	45 31	15 199	7 062
4	Apr 52-Sep 52	42 63	13 990	6 306
5	Dec 52-Mar 53	46 80	15 760	7 282
6	May 53-Sep 53	52 15	18 123	8 624
7	Oct 53-Mar 54	59 30	21 123	9 822
8	Jul 54-Mar 55	61 07	23 413	11 542
9	May 55-Nov 55	50 44	17 775	8 381
10	Dec 55-May 56	47 43	15 240	6 481
11	Aug 56-Feb 57	57 55	19 221	8 498
12	Mar 57-Aug 57	59 77	20 732	9 516
13	Sep 57-May 58	53 84	18 467	8 462
14	Jul 58-Jun 59	51 75	17 025	7 524
15	Jul 59-Jun 60	50 58	15 386	6 240
16	Jul 60-Aug 61	45 27	13 644	5 585
17	Sep 61-Jul 62	46 54	13 635	5 447
18	Feb 63-Jan 64	47 85	13 774	5 429
19	Jul 64-Jun 65	52 75	15 926	6 561
20	Jul 65-Jun 66	56 71	17 751	7 486
21	Jul 66-Jun 67	62 00	21 018	9 472
22	Jul 67-Jun 68	61 60	20 863	9 345
23	Jul 68-Jun 69	57 11	18 291	7 849
24	Jul 69-Jun 70	55 56	17 466	7 362
25	Jul 70-Jun 71	52 88	15 910	6 510
27	Oct 72-Sep 73	53 37	16 548	6 903
28	Oct 73-Jun 74	54 10	16 430	6 730
32	Jul 77-Jun 78	48 36	14 284	5 717
38	Jan 83-Dec 83	43 00	11 901	4 534
42	Jul 86-Jun 87	37 69	9 787	3 625
43	Jul 87-Jun 88	38 47	9 237	3 000
44	Jul 88-Jun 89	38 44	9 512	3 292
45	Jul 89-Jun 90	34 07	7 979	2 693
46	Jul 90-Jun 91	35 49	8 609	2 976
47	Jul 91-Dec 91	36 34	8 277	2 737
48	Jan 92-Dec 92	40 93	10 345	3 649
50	Jul 93-Jun 94	35 04	8 128	2 693
Trend rate of growth during the entire period (% per year)		-0 88	-1 79	-2 56

HCI= Headcount Index, PGI=Poverty Gap Index, SPGI= Squared Poverty Gap Index

Source: *World Bank (1997)*

*Poverty line= Rs 49 per capita per month at 1973-74 prices

The World Bank (1997) has produced time series data on the poverty ratio, poverty gap and squared poverty gap (the latter two are measures of poverty gap of those below the poverty line), from 1951-52 through 1993-94 based on a PL equal to Rs 49 per capita per month (at 1973-74 prices) and Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labour (CPI-AL) as deflator (See Table 2) The World Bank study shows that except for 1993-94 there was an increase in the poverty ratio with sharp deterioration in the conditions of the ultra poor, as judged by the upturn in the poverty gap ratios (see Table 2) from 1990-91 onwards Out of the 35 years data presented in Table 2, 18 had a poverty ratio of over 50 per cent The trend rate of decline in poverty during the half a century period is only -0 88 per cent This is not a respectable record to write home about because the so-called PL itself is a shameful one, reflecting the change in terms of the value of a fixed basket of commodities relating to 1973-74 The so-called PL (the 'pure laughing' line as it truly is) is a meaningless one as it can never fathom the depth of the growing material and social deprivations of the mass of the people The World Bank "scientists" or technicians would not find any "immiserisation" on the growth trajectory [see world Bank (1997), p 17] as they are blind to this relative deprivation which growth brings in In fact, what is there to debate about in a poverty line (for the economist a consultancy or a publication, of course, brings comfort) which is not placed within the overall economic and social context? As Peter Townsend put it,

> Human needs are essentially social, and analysis or exposition of standard of living and poverty must begin with that fact [Peter Townsend (1993), p 136]

During the period beginning 1951-52 through 1993-94, while India's real GNP increased 5 3 times, per capita income in real terms more than doubled The poverty ratio (if we take only two end points) declined from 45 3 per cent in 1951-52 to 35 04 per cent in 1993-94 with a trend rate of -0 88 Again, the effort to trumpet about the poverty alleviation of the so-called "ultra poor" based on a trend rate of -1 79 (some other slightly higher figure) spread over more than a generation, and that too with reference to a fixed scale for those who are below the PL, is a joke indeed (See table 2) India should, in fact, feel ashamed to note that between 1970 and 1993, the proportion of Indonesia's population living in poverty dropped from 58 per cent to eight per cent which, given India's own dismal track record, something she cannot hope to achieve even after another 50 years from now!

◆

IN sum, we may say that though India made some progress in building its production, the grim reality is that the country has not planned for the poor It would not be wrong to say that there was no sense of urgency about it This is ironic, given the fact that the people gave a massive mandate to the political leadership to act That the planners of the country did respond with wonderful alacrity and responsibility in the early years, right upto the early seventies is well exemplified in the Fifth Plan Approach Paper, the *Technical Note* and the Draft Plan following from them Today, the people's mandate stands spurned indeed Look at where we are as a nation, 291 million adults are still illiterate, a substantial majority of whom are females, whose capabilities are the key to changing the society Fortyfive million children were out of primary schools in 1995 Nearly one-third of children under 16 are forced into child labour One hundred and thirtyfive million people are denied access to primary health care, 226 million are without safe drinking water, 640 million lack basic sanitation and so on [See Mahbub-ul-Haq (1997)] That 350 million "live" below the poverty line which views people only as a biological entity and not as a social individual with self-respect Ironically, the same India which houses the largest number of the world's poor, was ranked first in arms imports among the developing countries[1]

That the nation can rise to any occasion is proved beyond doubt by the speed with which the leaders have ushered in the structural adjustment regime in the country Structural Adjustment Programme ranks very high on the political agenda In less than six years, the Prime Minister, the Finance Minister, several Union Ministers, Chief Ministers and senior bureaucrats have gone abroad innumerable times in order to convince the capital of the world that we have given up planning in favour of a market mediated regime Freedom for capital does not mean freedom for the vast majority of our people For those living in squalor and misery, where is the freedom of choice? True development should essentially result in enlarging the capabilities of the people and their choice Looking back, we have failed in this task during the last fifty years of freedom ■

NOTES

1 This is on the authority of Sukhamoy Chakravarty (1987), p 28
2 There was also a Five-Point Programme due to Sanjay Gandhi, son of Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister
3 A useful evaluation and some of major APPs is given in World Bank (1997)
4 For example, see World Bank (1990) and World Bank (1993)

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D R GOYAL Communal Challenge

(Continued from page 19)

equivalent of our practice It's translation as *dharma-nirapekshata* has played havoc because both believers and non-believers have gone to town with the misinterpre-tation so that people at large have become indifferent to secularism and communalism

I do not share the defeatist view that India is doomed to be taken over by the communal forces, be it the BJP or *Sangh Parivar* If we could withstand the worst onslaught on the secular character of the people in 1947 and go ahead to build a nation-state, territorially the largest in the history of the subcontinent, the people still have the strength to defeat the challenge that is seen in the fiftieth year of independence In these years the deprived and the depressed, the wretched of this earth, have developed a voice They see hope in democracy, in unity, in peace Only their positive instincts and energies have to be mobilised The biggest failure of the secular segment of opinion-makers is the inability to maintain the pre-independence tempo of mass contact The tendency to depend on community and caste loyalties for support rather than building united organisations at the grassroot level for finding concrete solutions to common problems has provided justification for communal parties The campaign against communalism has to be directed towards changing this tendency and reviving the constructive work approach with which Gandhi imparted a mass democratic character to the freedom movement ■

Celebrating "Freedom"?

SAILENDRA NATH GHOSH

Many Gandhian organisations have rightly decided to boycott the official celebrations on August 15, for we have lost the substance of freedom Since we accepted the so-called "Economic Reform" in 1991, we have mortgaged our socio-economic future to the World Bank and IMF Since we accepted the WTO (World Trade Organisation), we have brought ourselves under the octopus-like grip of the G-7 countries and lost our political independence to the superpowers There have been many instances in history where countries have been subdued But the kind of example which the Indian rulers have shown since 1991 in inviting fetters on ourselves is rare in history

Many people feel that the foreign exchange crisis in which we were plunged in 1991 left us with no alternative This is a wrong appraisal If our leaders had understood the game of the speculators in engineering the crisis—and if we had any understanding of our own political and economic strength —we would not have meekly surrendered like lambs We would have fought for rescheduling our debt payments and other ways

True, even during the seventies there have been alternating stances between self-reliance and dependence on foreign collaboration Since the mid-eighties, a craze for "high-tech" partially eclipsed self-reliance But since 1991, the policy of national self-reliance was overturned, the very concept of people's sovereignty was abdndoned in favour of TNC sovereignty

Earlier, our agriculture used to give primacy to local people's sustenance needs Since the import-oriented, export-objective-led pattern of "development" has been imposed, agriculture is being increasingly diverted form local people's needs to cash corps for exports People are being urged to run after money income pushing food crops and things of real value to the background The public distribution system is being weakened and the concept of grain stores under the village community's control is being discounted Indigenous genetic resources in rice, wheat, oilseeds, vegetables, cattle had already lost most of their diversities under the allurements of the Western model of development Now, whatever remains of the diversities is being allowed to be pirated by the gene robbers of the West Conditions are being created where our farmers come under the transnational seed corporations' regime They are being lured to unnatural seeds in the name of their high-yielding, disease-resistant, and drought-resistant crop potential Since not one of the resulting grains will germinate in the next round, the farmers are in reality being driven towards perpetual dependence on TNCs for seeds And if any farmer preserves his own seeds whose yields are equally high and which bear some of the other properties, the onus will be on him to prove that he has not stolen the seeds of TNCs This is the irony of our freedom

The government has opened the door to transnational corporations to set up their industries and our big industrial houses have agreed to become their partners to snuff out our small industries The TNCs will locate their polluting industries here and also take advantage of our cheap labour

Where Gandhiji had wanted development without foreign aid, our leaders now take pride in attracting foreign investments, as if these are not to be increasingly burdensome The lesson that foreign companies take out many times more than they give has been forgotten Our leaders are busy building "infrastructure" with these foreign investments But are not these infrastructures—of highways, seaports, airports, power plants, mega bridges, telecom—meant primarily to serve business interests? Are these not in some way or the other destroying the very infrastructure of people's lives, such as forests, agricultural lands, estuaries, wetlands, drainage channels, flood plains, and creating conditions for draining away more of the rural people's resources to the cities and foreign countries?

Cultural invasion through American violence and sex-ridden films and television is now eroding our culture Crime is spreading at a faster rate after this "liberalisation" and the elite's children are being won over to the culture of Pepsi and Coca Cola, Pizza Hutt and Kentucky Fried Chicken, leaving aside the far more nourishing and time-tested foods prepared by indigenous culinary practices These are all manifestations of colonisation

Globalisation of the free flow of capital and its resulting profits has been bringing in the globalisation of crime—of gun-totting schoolchildren, teenage pregnancy, rapes, kidnappings, divorces, drug addiction, suicides, killings, and dominance of the mafia in every sphere of life This is the value we are being asked to pay to "develop" This is the liberalisation which seeks to globalise exploitation of human labour, sex and bio-resources but severely restricts the cross-country movements of people

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To defeat this diabolical move, we need people's unity and development of a clear vision For this it is suggested that the following programmes be added to what many Gandhian organisations have already chalked out.

1) Sustained campaign for establishing communal harmony based on re-interpretation of religious scriptures to explore the ways of establishing each religion's pristine values in today's conditon
2) Promotion of a communitarian system of living for building the society as a cooperative commonwealth in which greed and cut-throatism has no place and which, therefore, displaces trade from the contrestage to just a medium of supplying our surplus products to fellow humans in other parts of the world who cannot produce these locally in spite of their best efforts Trade in any commodity is to have place only after meeting the needs of the poorest person in the locale
3) Promotion of self-reliance and utmost possible self-sufficiency at the local, regional and national levels
4) Practice of organic farming and as far as possible, of an integration of agri-horti-flori-pisci-silviculture with poultry farming and animal husbandry, in which the waste product of one becomes the food for the other, in order to produce the largest possible amount of foods and other crops—far larger in quantity and better in quality than chemical farming was capable of
5) To preserve and propagate indigenous seeds in cereals, vegetables, oilseeds, cattle, trees and to resist the lure of biotechnologically engineered seeds
6) To promote grain storage in every village under the village community's control in the interest of food security
7) To campaign to preserve the country's own patent law and to defeat the attempts at imposition of the WTO pattern of patent laws
8) To fight out the patent rights pirated by foreign companies out of our traditionally known bio-resources—both in the World Court and through people's movements
9) To stop biopiracy of botanical, zoological and human gene resources by demanding national legislation as well as by people's resistance
10) To save the highly efficacious medicinal systems of the advasis and to encourage Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha, Homeoepathy and Naturopathy so that they can compete with allopathy and surgery
11) To demand better and more comprehensive health care and medicare from public funds
12) To demand better and more life-oriented education from public funds
13) To demand drinking water facilities in every village *on a sustainable basis* (Planting trees around ponds and wells is necessary for recharging ground water)
14) Apart from establishing self-sufficiency in food, to plan for village self-sufficiency in energy generation by *on-site integration* of bio-energy, solar energy in its various forms, wind energy, mini-hydel, etc
15) To start a movement for stopping collaboration with TNCs and frustrate their attempts to buy up India's popular enterprises (Reportedly, the multinational food chains are trying to buy up India's Haldiram Sweets, Bikaneri Bhujia, and the foreign Institutional investors (FIIs) are stealthily trying to capture India's undervalued but asset-rich institutions like State Bank of India, Bank of India, BHEL, etc In every country they will try to do like this) These need to be fought by picketing and consumer boycott
16) To demand the banning of films of violence and titillation and of films that suggest that eve-teasers ultimately succeed in having their objectives fulfiled in securing the self-surrender of the women
17) To demand the cancellation of international debts
    i) in recognition of the fact that today's rich countries have acquisitioned their wealth by the loot of colonial peoples, slave labour and decimation of adivasi peoples,

    and

    ii) in recognition that tropical forests are the means of survival of life on this planet, and to enable the protection of these forests, the tropical forests need to be saved and for this the people of the tropics need be freed from the burdens of international debt
18) To start a mass movement for remoulding the Bretton Woods Institutions (IMF and World Bank) and if that is not possible to scrap these
19) To start mass mobilisation demanding the scrapping of the WTO, and to give primacy to promotion of trade with the South—that is with South Asian, and South-East Asian and the Indian Ocean Rim countries—and for increasing the purchasing power of the people within the country
20) To start a mass movement against the attempt to control the socio-economic direction of the world communities by the trio of the World Bank, IMF and WTO and against the efforts to reduce the UNO to a rubber stamp of the G-7 countries led by the USA ■

BLUE PENCIL

Consequences of 'Journalistic Activism'

G S BHARGAVA

For the first time in India as far as I know, an English daily has shifted the correspondence column—as readers' letters are euphemistically called—to the top of the editorial page There is no hyperbole in the claim of the *Andhra Pradesh Times* in this respect The kick-off was also promising with plenty of letters, some knowledgeable, on the newspaper's *exposé* of the goings-on in the Sericulture Commissioner's office and her (the Commissioner's) rejoinder which was duly published Full marks for the enterprise of the editor

The yield of letters will naturally taper off because many readers are motivated by grievances to write to the newspapers and a daily catalogue of citizens' woes may not be interesting reading Hard work can get over the problem, however In the *Tribune* in Chandigarh in 1980 Prem Bhatia told me that the letters to the editor were too few and dull Could I do something in the matter? Patiently poring over the missives in the bag one found there were quite a few of general interest When edited and published, they set off a veritable flood of similar letters We had a raging controversy for days on end on the proper way of spelling 'Punjab' in the nomenclature, Punjab University Should it be 'Punjab' or 'Panjab'? Should we revert to the pre-partition spelling still used in Pakistan?

I had a similar experience in *The Hindustan Times* earlier, when B G Verghese added it to the chores of Assistant Editors The only danger was that anybody could walk into your cubicle with a letter for publication and some of them would not take a 'no' for answer They brought fruit or toffees as gifts and if you did not fall for them there were even veiled threats

Hyderabad readers are also prolific letter-writers if my experience a decade ago is an index but they have a penchant for letting themselves off on generalisations and ending up sermonising If you converted the statements of self-styled leaders into letters, both of 'which' were in profusion, they would cry blue murder Good luck, nevertheless

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MEANWHILE, how much of the rumpus in the Lok Sabha with the feathers flying between the Prime Minister and Atal Behari Vajpayee on Gujral's alleged offer of 'unconditional talks' with the Kashmiri militants was caused by the Press? Plenty, it seems *The Times of India* report, for instance, began 'The Prime Minister offered to hold unconditional talks with militants in the insurgency-hit Kashmir Valley' The quote and its annotation which followed, however, read "'Government is ready for unconditional talks with misguided elements in the Valley so that peace is returned to the paradise on earth'" That was the quotation and then came the annotation "He did not use the word 'militant' and instead called them 'our children, our dear ones who have been misled"

If the Prime Minister did not use the word 'militants'—apparently deliberately, because he described them as 'our children, our dear ones who have been misled'—why should the 'intro', even if added at the desk, have been so categorical and the headline so unambiguous? Would Gujral have called Abdul Ghani Lone or Syed Ali Shah Geelani or even

Mainstream

(August 23, 1997)

"Fifty Years of Freedom
Where are the Children?"

Contributors include

C. Gopalan *(Nutrition)*

Rajindar Sachar *(Child Rights)*

Krishna Kumar *(Primary Education)*

Imrana Qadeer *(Child Health)*

S. Anandalakshmy *(Child Development)*

Vasudha Dhagamwar *(Childhood Denied)*

Yasin Malik, 'our misled children'?

During my visits to the Valley when the terrorists were on the top, I noticed foreign correspondents, especially, regarding the Hurriyat Conference and its leaders as the spokesmen of the people and lavishing attention on them When they used terror to force a bandh or disrupt elections, it was projected as protest by Muslim separatists The BBC, too, was no exception to this trend Many visiting Indian 'special correspondents' also do the same because the Hurriyat leaders, talking in different voices, some soft and the others demanding, yield copy

Reverting to Gujral's 'offer', the same report by the *India Abroad News Service (IANS)* correspondent was clear It said ' Gujral said he was willing to hold unconditional talks with the children who have been misled ' Incidentally, *The Times of India* report, cited earlier, was among the less untwisted There were others which even hinted that Gujral was ready to sit round the table with the creatures of the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Directorate and recalled Chandra Shekhar's 'similar offer' to the Hizbul Mujahideen,

More importantly, the needless shindy kicked up in the Lok Sabha, with the likes of Chandra Shekhar contributing their penny worth of wisdom, has drained Gujral's strategy—of putting the ball in the Hurriyat's court, as the *IANS* report correctly interpreted it—and let the forked-tongued Hurriyat people off the hook If careless reporting is at its root, here is nothing to be proud of it

Talking of Gujral, rebutting the American press attack on him for having embraced Gaddafi during the Persian Gulf crisis, N J Nanporia in the Sunday Soliloquies column in the *Deccan Herald* says 'Gujral is the kind of man who is prepared to embrace anyone willing to be embraced '

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THE following is a more blatant version of such journalistic activism, if one may say so A correspondent, apparently not sufficiently acquainted with our freedom struggle, virtually triggered the transfer of an IAS officer, Govind Swarup, who, as Secretary of the Department of Culture in the Maharashtra Government, had supervised the production of a video-cassette on leaders in the freedom struggle, 1857-1947 Included among the leaders was Mohammed Ali Jinnah and there lay the rub According an *Asian Age* report from Mumbai, the Chief Minister, Manohar Joshi, was asked by a journalist at a press 'meet' how the 'slip-up' had taken place and whether the officer responsible for it would be transferred In response, Joshi announced Swaroop's transfer there and then The officer was then at a different function alongwith his Minister, Pramod Navalkar

Two issues are involved in the episode First, the loaded question apparently intended to make a scapegoat of the officer Questions like whether the Minister had stopped beating his wife, even if loaded, too, might pass for being clever but this one was targeted at an officer not present there to defend himself Secondly, the value judgment of the 'slip-up' One does not have to be an admirer of Jinnah to acknowledge his contribution to the freedom struggle Sarojini Naidu had called him 'prince among patriots' Even in our time in the early 1950s, the building of the Bombay Pradesh Congress Committee off Grant Road in central Mumbai was called Jinnah Hall As the architect of Pakistan he would not be obviously popular in our country but he was also the founder of our sister republic carved out of India

True, Rafiq Zakaria, an eminent Islamic scholar and former Minister, has objected to the inclusion of Jinnah among our freedom fighters, denouncing him as 'the villian who divided Hindus and Muslims and also harmed the Muslims by dividing them between India and Pakistan' If there had been many Hindus left in Pakistan they might have been similarly cross with Gandhiji for not having prevented the partition That need not necessarily reflect historical truth

Finally, *The Statesman* was once famous for its third edits written in a lighter vein but extremely elegantly They were mostly from the pen of Niranjan Majumdar, a more facile writer than whom I had not come across Once, in a bar off Park Street in Calcutta we were imbibing with abandon when suddenly he looked at his watch and said 'Oh, it is 3 o'clock I have to do an edit ' And it was a brilliant specimen of a third edit

After he passed away and Jug Suraiya moved to *The Times of India* to replace Trivadi (Dattatreyan) one savoured the same flavour in this third edits which are not quotations strung together as with some other writers But lately there are 'slip-ups' if I may borrow the Bombay journalist's phrase It was written, for instance, in a recent edit that 'much water has *flown* down Calcutta's streets since' Ajoy Mukherjee was caught in the traffic jam caused by waterlogging ■

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS (AUGUST 3-9, 1997)

NATIONAL

August 3

- Rebel Congressman and former Bihar Chief Minister Dr Jagannath Mishra floats the Bihar Congress Bachao Manch to revive the Congress in Bihar but insists that they are not parting ways with the Congress
- Janata Dal President Sharad Yadav says he will appeal against the trial court order to frame charges against him in the Jain *hawala* case
- Leaders of various Naga factions meeting in Atlanta (US) say in a signed statement, "From all walks of Naga society we commit ourselves to peace"
- All Manipur Students' Union gives a call for dawn to dusk Manipur bandh on August 6, 1997 to press its demand for the protection of State territory while settling any issue with Naga groups

August 4

- Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackery defers the ban of Railway Minister Ram Vilas Paswan's entry into Maharashtra on grounds of "patience and patriotism" till August 15
- CPI-M General Secretary Harkishan Singh Surjeet meets Prime Minister I K Gujral, reportedly in a bid to clear misunderstandings created by the media
- BJP leader Jaswant Singh issues a statement expressing his apprehension about the banning of Arun Shourie's book on Dr B R Ambedkar *Worshipping False Gods*
- Union Ministers of State Jayanti Natarajan, Kamala Sinha and Renuka Chaudhary tell *The Asian Age* that they were urging the Prime Minister to push through the Women's Reservation Bill "Let them vote and let the world see who is pro-women and who is not"
- Samajwadi Party MP Phoolan Devi, the bandit queen of yesteryears, threatens to immolate herself in Parliament if the Mayawati Government in UP reopened cases against her Rashtriya Janata Dal MP Bhagwati Devi advises her "Pick up your rifle again, I'll be with you"

August 5

- Sharad Yadav loyalists among the Janata Dal MPs take up cudgels on his behalf with the CPI-M and tell the Party to first seek the resignation of Jyoti Basu's government in West Bengal over the Ledger scam and then talk about Sharad Yadav's resignation from a party post
- Supreme Court gives a free hand to the Enforcement Directorate to arrest former Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao's son Prabhakar Rao for his alleged involvement in the Rs 130-crore urea scam
- Union Cabinet clears the proposal to instal a statue of Mahatma Gandhi in the Capital The exact venue is to be finalised later in consultation with other political parties
- Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan calls on PM I K Gujral after the 10th meeting of the Indo-China Joint Working Group and renews the Chinese invitation to the Indian Prime Minister to visit Beijing
- The Joint Council of Action of Central Government Employees gives a call to go on an indefinite strike from September 24 on the Fifth Pay Commission recommendations which will benefit only the top bureaucrats

August 6

- In the face of unrelenting opposition from Left parties and also the BJP, PM Gujral decides to withdraw the Insurance Regulatory Authority Bill and Finance Minister P Chidambaram does so reluctantly Constituents of the Left Front charge the PM with not heeding to their advice and not consulting them before moving the Bill
- Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Renuka Chaudhary tells the Lok Sabha that the government was considering a Bill to ban parents of more than two children from contesting elections
- United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) finally admits that Sanjoy Ghose, died while trying to escape ULFA says they had decided to release Ghose and he was being escorted by a team when their scouts were killed by the Army and they decided to retreat in panic Sanjoy, according to this version, tried to flee his tormentors and slipped from a steep rock to meet his death
- Former Bihar CM Laloo Prasad Yadav is shifted to the Indira Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences after complaints of pain in the chest and his counsel, Shakeel Ahmad tells the court that CBI Joint Director U N Biswas was planning to take Yadav outside the State for interrogations and poison him
- Union Minister for Rural Areas and Employment K Yerran Naidu assures the Rajya Sabha that the Centre will take appropriate action including recoupment of the directed funds after the West Bengal Public Accounts Committee submits its final report on the so-called Ledger scam
- Shahi Imam of the Delhi Jama Masjid Syed Abdullah Bukhari says "Those who didn't go to Pakistan (after partition) did the right thing There is nothing greater than one's motherland it is better to die hungry in one's own country"

August 7

- Rajya Sabha passes the statutory resolution moved by the BJP disapproving the ordinance promulgated on June 5, 1997 to eliminate non-serious candidates from Presidential and Vice-Presidential elections The Bill to replace the ordinance is thus forced out of consideration stage The government would have to bring it again
- Congress President Sitaram Kesri says in Calcutta at the Congress session that the Left should make common cause with the Congress if they truly want to fight communalism
- After a meeting of the BJP Parliamentary Board, Party President L K Advani and Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha Atal Behari Vajpayee decide to let Sahib Singh Verma continue as the Delhi CM even though former CM Madan Lal Khurana has been acquitted in the *hawala* case
- PM Gujral tells the Rajya Sabha "We want to pursue the policy of befriending Pakistan but at the same time we cannot ignore the terrorist activities in Jammu and Kashmir and elsewhere"

August 8

- Former Delhi CM Madan Lal Khurana, piqued at the BJP's refusal to reinstate him as the CM after his acquittal in the *hawala* case, resigns from the Vice-President's post of the party

- At a press meet to mark his completion of six months in office Punjab CM Prakash Singh Badal urges the Prime Minister to take up with the British Government the question of the return of the *Kohinoor* diamond and the plume worn by Guru Gobind Singh

August 9

- "I am ageing and if the Congress collapses, the responsibility will be yours," says Sitaram Kesri to Mrs Sonia Gandhi who was on the dais at the Congress session in Calcutta Mrs Sonia Gandhi made a brief interpolation, invoking Rajiv Gandhi, quoting from his 1985 address at the Congress session wherein he raised many issues which remain unanswered
- PM I K Gujral opens in Mumbai the 55th anniversary function of the 'Quit India' movement organised by the Shiv-Sena-BJP Government of Maharashtra paying handsome tributes to Capt Lakshmi Sehgal of the all-women Rani Jhansi Regiment of the INA who was present at the function The PM highlights the role played by the INA in bringing the Independence Day closer

INTERNATIONAL

August 3

- Historian Gerald K Haines writes in the unclassified CIA journal *Studies of Intelligence* that the United States Air Force repeatedly concocted stories of alleged sightings of Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs) in the fifties and sixties to cover up the fact that their super-secret spy plane had been spotted
- British Minister Peter Mendelson tells the BBC the Labour Government is investigating allegations that Hong Kong's last Governor Chris Patten leaked details of a secret deal with China which appeared in the published excerpts of Jonathan Dimbleby's forthcoming book on Patten's last day in office

August 4

- Mohammad Khatami takes the oath of office as the fifth elected President of Iran Addressing the *Majlis* (Parliament) he declares, "We will have relations with every government which respects our independence and does not interfere in our internal affairs But we will stand up against those who want to lord it over us"
- South Africa expels Portugal's ambassador Vasco Valente for allegedly disclosing publicly a sensitive letter from President Nelson Mandela addressed to Indonesian President Suharto about the East Timor question
- France decides to suspend its diplomatic ties with Bosnia as long as Muslim, Croat and Serb leaders do not agree on a common envoy for their country

August 5

- A Korean Jumbo jet, on flight 801 from Seoul to Guam (the US island in the Pacific) crashes while trying to land at Guam's international airport with 254 people on board
- Several organisations of people of Indian origin make a fervent plea to Queen ElizabethII to return Indian assets including the *Kohinoor* diamond as a generous gesture to mark the Golden Jubilee of Indian Independence
- US Congressman Bruce Morrison says the IRA's political wing Sinn Fein is ready to give up for the time being its goal of a united Ireland in the interest of peace
- Israel says it would not lift a travel ban on Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip or ease economic sanctions until Yasser Arafat's self-rule government cracks down on Islamic militants
- Abdul Ghani, a guard posted on August 15, 1975 at the residence of President of Bangladesh Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, tells the court he could not attack the killers of the President on that fateful day because a senior officer had earlier taken the bullets from all the guards
- More than 3000 Nepalese students march in Kathmandu against the coalition government of Communist (United Marxist Leninist), the Rightist National Democratic Party and the Pro-India Nepal Sadbhavna Party and hand over a petition signed by 300,000 people to protest against price hike of petroleum products, artificial scarcity of fertilisers and rigging the local elections

August 6

- Sinn Fein President Gerry Adams tells British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland at their talks in Belfast "Sinn Fein enters negotiations as an Irish Republican Party seeking to promote the broad nationalist objective of an end to British rule in Ireland"
- White House spokesman Mike McCurry says President Bill Clinton does not think a national apology for slavery will be an appropriate first step for his national dialogue on race Civil rights leader Jesse Jackson says "an apology is in order"

August 7

- British historian Prof David Stafford says documents show that Winston Churchill authorised payment of about 10 million dollars to senior aides of Gen Franco in an effort to keep Spain neutral and out of the World War II
- Palestinian President Yasser Arafat says, in an interview with Israeli newspaper *Yediot Ahoronot*, "Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has declared war on us and we are getting ready for it"
- Israel lifts the naval blockade of the Gaza strip and partially opens border crossings into Jordon and Egypt but refuses to lift entry ban on about 80,000 Palestinian labourers and traders or to unfreeze $ 40 million in tax revenues it owes to the Palestinian Authority

August 8

- Kenya recalls its ambassador to the US Benjamin Edgar Kipkorir because he mistakenly presented an opposition plan for reforms to the US House of Representatives Africa Sub-Committee as the government's plan
- Pakistan PM Nawaz Sharif tells the BBC television in an interview at Islamabad that no cut in military spending was possible "unless we resolve our differences with India and until Kashmir issue is resolved"
- The new co-Prime Minister of Cambodia Ung Huot says that opposition to a bloody take-over will dwindle and ASEAN nations will agree to admit Cambodia into the regional body this very year

August 9

- President Khatami appoints journalist turned university professor Ms Masoumah Ebtekar, 36, as Vice-President and gives her the charge of Environment Protection She is the first ever woman in the Iranian Cabinet
- Church bells wail in Nagasaki (Japan) to mark the 52nd anniversary of its nuclear bomb holocaust Mayor Icchou Ito declares at a huge memorial service gathering, "We demand an end to all kinds of experiments of nuclear weapons" ■

RABI RAY Thoughts on Golden Jubilee

(Continued from page 5)

Parliament and the legislatures And it must fight only against corruption but collectively against the three aforementioned negative phenomena in ian society

The energy that will be generated as a result of s movement will definitely help to change society ybody fighting against the three negative enomena will be objectively assisting in building egalitarian order where there is no place for mmunalism, crass casteism, etc

Communalism poses one of the biggest dangers the values of our freedom struggle The entire ional movement stood against communalism it is being sought to be undermined The nicious concept of *Hindutva* is a negation of all t we espoused for during the freedom struggle must be recalled in the fiftieth anniversary of ependence how the two stalwarts of our freedom iggle—Gandhiji and Netaji Subhas Chandra e—had beckoned us to fight against communa- n I can never forget those memorable words of bhas Chandra Bosae when he addressed Mahatma ndhi as the Father of the Nation and spoke of ing launched the holy war of liberation by bilising all sections of the people It was he who l the unique distinction of uniting all—Hindus, slims, Sikhs, Christians—in that holy war All se who equate *Hindutva* with nationalism have respect for the philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi l Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose They have no idea how freedom was fought and won

But it must be admitted in all frankness that the *dutva-wallas* could lately acquire such a strength ause no political party, barring some Socialist lers and the Leftists, had any programme of ting Hindus and Muslims on the lines of Mahatma ndhi's 18-point programme wherein the specific k of Hindu-Muslim unity was given exceptional minence And by playing the Hindu card the igress gave strength and sustenance to the same ocates of *Hindutva*

Removal of caste is the *sine qua non* of any litarian order But today instead of removing the te system, it is being sought to be perpetuated s high time we take a solemn pledge in this eth year of freedom to break the caste tentacles—*toio*—as Dr Lohia had suggested

Lately the Dalits have come up and begun erting their rights in their legitimate bid for a ce in the sun They have also been able to get ense of identity This is a positive development no doubt but I see a danger unless we are able to bridge the schism between the Dalits on the one side and the intermediate castes on the other, this could spell havoc That is also because some political parties in order to build their own vote-banks are encouraging tensions between them and widening the schism

◆

I feel the greatest achievement in the past fifty years is the increasing strength that the common citizen's faith in our democratic system has come to acquire with every passing day This was best seen in the elections held after the Emergency I vividly remember how the people voted at that time The results of those elections were a tribute to the common people who used their right to vote in such a remarkable manner to dislodge the entrenched authoritarian regime which was striving to perpetuate its rule According to one specific survey, even when the politicians have suffered severe devaluation the poor citizens' reassertion of their sovereignty through the ballot has become more pronounced and powerful

At the same time what cannot be denied is the growing collaboration between the politicians as well as bureaucracy on one side and the criminal elements on the other The Vohra Committee report brings this out in bold relief I am ashamed as both a citizen of this country and a politician at the Vohra Committee's revelations which is conclusive evidence of the politician-criminal nexus

Our biggest failure in the last fifty years has been that we as a government and a people have completely failed to translate into reality the commitment we made during the movement for independence, the commitment to ensure *swadeshi, swavalamban* and employment in the country at large This becomes all the more glaring in the wake of the reversal of the economic policies since 1991 As a Socialist I am highly concerned at this failure

The path ahead is no doubt arduous for all of us But I have abiding faith in the people of our country India will certainly rise from the level to which it has fallen For that it is essential to transfer power to the people—the masses are without a leadership at present In the golden jubilee of India's independence they have to be mobilised for a concerted battle against the three main evils so as to revive the values of the freedom struggle What is necessary is to build a renewed people's movement—not to organise yet another party—with that end in view ■

Posted at CPSO in New Delhi on August 15/16, 1997 **Delhi Postal REGD No DL-1103**
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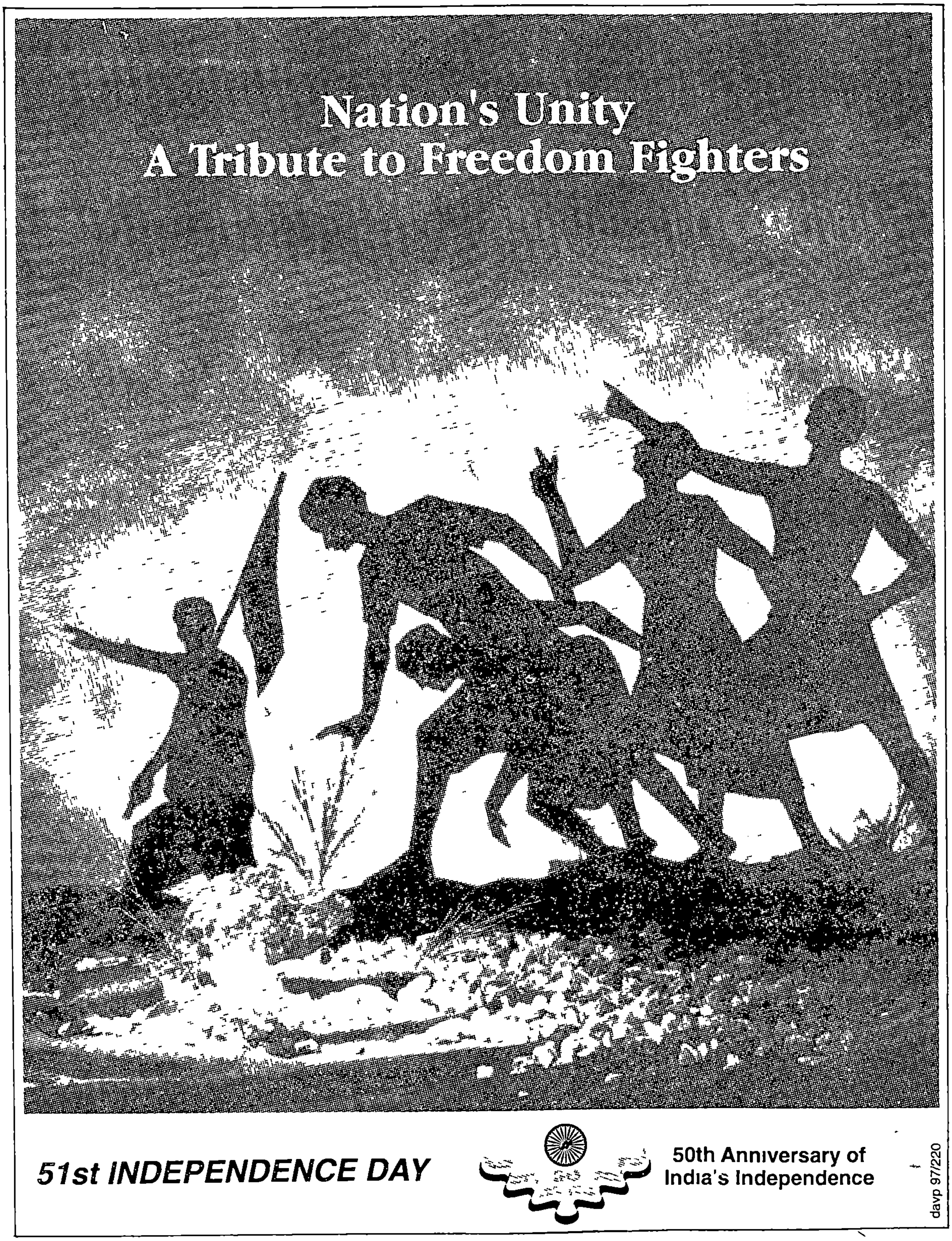
Nation's Unity
A Tribute to Freedom Fighters
51st INDEPENDENCE DAY
50th Anniversary of India's Independence
davp 97/220

Edited and published by Sumit Chakravartty *for* Perspective Publications Private Ltd, 1E/12, "Sewak House" (First Floor) Jhandewalan Extension, New Delhi-110055 Tel 7516763, 7516893 Fax 7519838 *Printed at* New Delhi Printers 20/7 Old Market, West Patel Nagar, New Delhi-110008 *Editor* Sumit Chakravartty *Editorial Adviser* Nikhil Chakravartty *General Manager* Praveen Mehta *Executive Manager* Jasjit Kay Nagra

Mainstream

VOL XXXV No 37 August 23,1997 Rs 10

Fifty years of Freedom

WHERE ARE THE CHILDREN?

ESSAYS IN DEFENCE OF THE CHILD

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY • RAJINDAR SACHAR
C. GOPALAN • IMRANA QADEER
S. ANANDALAKSHMY • KRISHNA KUMAR
VASUDHA DHAGAMWAR • THOMAS MATTHAI

MUHAMMAD YUNUS

Towards a Poverty-free World

Prisoner of Rhetoric?

The speeches by both President K R Narayanan and Prime Minister I K Gujral at national functions in the Capital organised specifically to mark the golden jubilee of our independence have most appropriately focussed attention on the growing menace of corruption in general and corruption in public life, notably in high places, in particular Both have raised legitimate concern over the evil eating into the vitals of our society and polity, and threatening the very fabric of our democracy as well Both have laid justifiable emphasis on the need to launch what the President described as a "widespread national movement" against the canker of corruption (alongside the other scourges of communalism, casteism and criminalisation of politics) with the PM going a step further to call for social boycott of and satyagraha against the corrupt

These are bold words indeed It was also refreshing to find I K Gujral going out of his way to criticise, in a BBC interview telecast on August 15 itself, Indira Gandhi's statement that corruption was a global phenomenon and interpreting such an observation as a convenient alibi for inaction something, he promised, he would not resort to The candour of his straightforward declarations in that interview and in his address to the nation from the Red Fort ramparts in the morning was sufficient to reveal his sense of anguish and agony at the rapidly spreading disease in our socio-political-economic life But the vital question is has he been able to transcend the rhetoric to spell out his concrete plan of action on this score?

Neither in the interview nor at the Red Fort speech did he outline the specific contours of the mass movement or satyagraha Gujral had in view True, he was more specific at the conference hosted by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) on "Fifty Years of Indian Industry—Challenges for the Future" in New Delhi the following day (August 16), and while announcing that anti-corruption activities would constitute a part of his formal agenda he disclosed at that gathering that a special cell would be set up at the PMO to handle complaints about corruption If media reports are correct, the cell is to be headed by a transparently honest police officer of eminence and distinction Ms Kiran Bedi who has always acted with courage and promptitude Nevertheless, the PM stopped short of saying whatever he has in mind, in trying to bring the politicians charged with graft of a high order to book Hence while his intentions were never questioned the public at large failed to be convinced of both his capacity and determination to fight graft among those holding high office This failure can be traced to Gujral's mishandling of the Laloo episode that exposed his pusillanimity and weak-kneed approach to such a crucial issue as corruption But his declaration of an anti-corruption crusade without going into the specifics only strengthened the cynicism he has engendered in himself and the ruling conglomerate he heads As a veteran public figure who was in the JD and the UF till the other day exclaimed "How on earth is he seeking to initiate the mass movement? By addressing the very persons who are corrupt to the core? Isn't then the whole exercise being reduced to a farce?"

To be fair to Gujral, he is well meaning and did not really think of making a hollow pledge on corruption Likewise he exhorted for translating into reality, at long last, the *garibi hatao* programme first placed before the public by no less a person than Indira Gandhi But on both counts the rhetoric will turn out to be empty unless he can present a concrete, coherent and cogent action plan both feasible and viable

Beyond vague generalities he has to project a specific course that would establish the fact that he means business and is keen to bridge the wide gulf between the average politician's words and deeds Only then would he be in a position to leave behind his unsavoury past of kowtowing and surrendering to the antics of Laloo Prasad Yadav, and look ahead with courage and confidence

August 19

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CORRUPTION

Need for Social Ferment

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

There are many aspects of the celebration of the golden jubilee of independence—the magnificent pageantry that one witnessed in Delhi—which would be long remembered by millions all over the country thanks largely to the television However, it was President Narayanan's gentle but firm warning against corruption which has emerged as a definite landmark in the struggle for a better India

There is nothing new for the First Citizen to address a warning to his countrymen against the menace of corruption What President Narayanan has put across is something extraordinary, underlying that an extraordinary situation demands a drastic solution This is precisely what President Narayanan did in his first official pronouncement as the Head of our Republic Here lies the significance of his observation which may bring discomfort to many but few can disagree with

In his Red Fort speech the next morning Prime Minister Gujral gave a call to fight corruption, which will no doubt be significant Nowadays it is particularly fashionable to quote Gandhiji, and this cuts across ideological or political barriers But hardly anybody has drawn the attention of his countrymen to a very blunt passage from Gandhiji which is worth quoting

> Corruption will be out one day, however so much one may try to conceal it, and it is its right and duty in every case of justifiable suspicion, call its servants to strict account, dismiss them, sue them in a law court, or appoint an arbitrator or inspector to scrutinise their conduct as it likes

Obviously, such a step against corruption—or, what has come to be called the criminalisation of politics—can hardly be possible unless and until it is made into a veritable social movement, as Gandhiji has enjoined, or into a mass political movement

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LOOKING back on the temper of the public in the last three years, what needs to be said is that the public in general is indeed fed up with corruption and it has been growing cynical at the political leadership, particularly those in power, as also its henchman, the bureaucracy, as it is getting a strong impression that while charges of corruption have been bandied about by politicians against rival politicians, they do not seem to be serious in punishing the culprits The manner in which the Jain *hawala* charges have been made use of during the election campaign has only helped to confirm this Similarly the tardiness displayed in unearthing the Bofors scandal by those who found that politically they would stand to lose if Rajiv Gandhi's image is sullied, brings out the same impact on the public In fact, any Prime Minister, irrespective of party affiliation, was expected to unearth the entire story of the Bofors kickback, but not only the politicians but the very powerful bureaucrats have taken the lead, sometimes quite blatantly, to cover up the culprits in the Bofors deal That was one of the ways by which Rajiv Gandhi has so far escaped the ignominy of having been found out in the sensational case However, in the public eye, few, very few, believe that he was innocent The general suspicion is that a large portion of the kickback was transferred to Rajiv Gandhi's in-laws' family

Leaving aside the notorious Bofors case or the HDW deal (which in fact had surfaced during Indira Gandhi's time) there are a number of other cases which need to be looked into, if the public confidence in the official investigation, particularly the CBI, has to be restored Since it is a fully government agency, and the government itself is not trusted, it becomes difficult for the public to go by the CBI allegations alone In recent months, the manner in which the CBI chiefs have been suddenly transferred has deepened public suspicion about the reliability of such an agency In times of crisis, such as this one, this has created a further slump in the public confidence in the government's bonafides to combat corruption It is upto the government, particularly the Ministers, to take the necessary care to restore public confidence in the CBI and other investigating agencies under the government

Readers, please note....

This issue of Mainstream *is focussing on the subject of children in the backdrop of the fiftieth anniversary of freedom Since this section—"Fifty years of Freedom Where are the Children?"—contains important contributions of lasting value the price of this issue is being raised to Rs 10*

—Editor

What the government has to keep in mind is that there has to be public confidence in the government agencies These have been badly mauled since the days of Indira Gandhi, and it would be the height of folly on the part of the government to ignore this aspect of the problem In this connection, Prime Minister Gujral's statements have not helped after promising to fight corruption, he has warned against "witch hunting"—which is the very excuse that the defenders of corruption often raise In the name of witch-hunt, the star suspects have often been exonerated and one sees them running about quite nonchalantly as if they are not even under suspicion

One of the most effective instruments by which the public has been able to bring quite a number of cases to book is the Public Interest Litigation If one goes into its origin, it would be seen that some of the outstanding jurists of the country permitted its use as a means by which to fight the notorious delay in law and also to cut short the intricacies of the law, by which the corrupt often make their escape In recent years, it is mostly the vulnerable sections which have raised an outcry against PIL (Public Interest Litigation) Therefore, any attack on the institution of the Public Interest Litigation would amount to weakening the campaign against corruption which has been spreading in recent months If the PIL is wrongly used by any interested party, it is for the authorities to rectify that lapse, and not to attack the very institution itself However, the last protection for the PIL can only be provided by the public A vigilant public can never afford to be divested of this law-earned weapon even if it is inconvenient for the government or other establishments under attack Rather there has to be public outcry against such moves or criticism or even adverse comments by those in authority

Recent months have shown that those who have been hauled up in major scams take advantage of loopholes in the law The manner in which the system of "anticipatory bail" is being used by star performers in corruption is a case in point Unless there is strong public resentment at such loopholes, there is always the possibility of the arraigned taking advantage of the loopholes in the law to escape punishment or delay being punished It is sickening to find persons directly implicated in mega scams, moving about with all the facilities that a common citizen enjoys

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THE case of Bihar raises some serious questions There is not a whiff of evidence to show that the Bihar Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav has not been implicated in the notorious fodder scam case The public fury and administrative dislocation that he brought about before his arrest show the danger of handling such corruption cases The game in such cases is to hold a snap election in which the accused may come out triumphant taking advantage of the loopholes in the law And once an election is won, it may be claimed that "the people" (that is, the voter) has exonerated such a person who is being unnecessarily harassed by the arm of the law Let it be clearly asserted by those in authority that nobody who faces a charge of corruption can escape the clutches of the law by taking recourse to the electoral process Winning an election is no guarantee of insurance against corruption Rather corruption should debar a citizen from the electoral process The vote must never be an insurance for protection against corruption

One of the VIPs in our politics has recently commented about corruption benfiting communalism He has not made it clear to the public as to whose alibi he was pressing when he chose communalism as his main target, leaving aside the corrupt It is a pity that other political leaders did not take this up to upbraid his politics in the present context One would expect that the Prime Minister's campaign against corruption would not make such a sinister demarcation and would brand corruption outright without making the finer distinction with communalism Today the menace of corruption is all-pervasive Since the very exalted VVIPs have been found involved in corruption, it is but natural for those down below to indulge in this anti-social act without any hesitation The media has not been amiss in showing up criminals getting into politics with the support or blessings of those at the top

It is precisely because of this reason that Gandhiji's injunction as spelt out by President Narayanan makes it clear that there must be a social *movement*, if not a political one, against corruption However, Prime Minister Gujral's call against corruption makes it more imperative to start a nationwide crusade This is a superhuman undertaking which cannot be taken up by individuals It has to be a mass movement Which means there has to be *social ferment*—including social boycott of the corrupt—which will make the society vigilant about the need to weed out corruption This is not just one individual case caught in the wrong It is more important for a society to be in ferment to clean itself up

What better could be the mandate for this great democracy after it has celebrated its first fifty years? ■

'We Don't Want a Dialogue of the Deaf'

PAKISTAN'S INFORMATION MINISTER OUTLINES ISLAMABAD'S APPROACH TO INDO-PAK RELATIONS

In the following interview to The Hindu's *Islamabad correspondent, Amit Baruah, distinguished journalist Mushahid Hussain Syed, now Information Minister in the Nawaz Sharif Government, speaks on the last fifty years, Indo-Pak relations and the major challenges for his government It is being reproduced from* The Hindu *with due acknowledgement*

—Editor

Question How would you look back at Pakistan's 50 years of freedom?

Answer It was a hard-fought freedom for the Muslims of South Asia And it was a well-deserved freedom for them We have had our ups and downs, our difficulties and odds to meet But, in the end, we have come through The people are enjoying the fruits of freedom More important, after 50 years there is a renewal of faith in the country, renewal of faith in the future because the party which created Pakistan is the party which is leading Pakistan to economic progress and prosperity today

Question Do you think the bitterness that marked the creation of Pakistan is a thing of the past?

Answer That is a thing of the past People like me who come from the born-free generation have no recollection of Partition For us, India is just another country, a neighbour, of course a difficult neighbour, an adverserial neighbour We want to live with India on an equal footing and normalise relations The bitterness, probably, is only in the older generation who witnessed the difficulties of Partition, especially the killings that took place on both sides

Question So the younger generation has nothing to do with the legacy of the old?

Answer The younger generation sees India as a neighbour India, of course, should learn not to be the bully of the block, not to be the big bad brother in the neighbourhood, but should live as a country which wants normal relations with smaller neighbours We see it as a country which has had a difficult relationship not just with Pakistan, but with all its smaller neighbours

Question In this context, how do you view the Gujral doctrine which seeks better relations with all its neighbours? And, as you know, India's relations with all its neighbours have improved with Mr Gujral at the helm Is that applicable to Pakistan as well?

Answer Unfortunately, the so-called Gujral doctrine makes an exception of occupied Kashmir, because what applies to other countries of South Asia does not seem to apply in the case of Pakistan or the case of occupied Kashmir We would like to test Mr Gujral's rhetoric with the reality of his policies And, unfortunately, there seems to be a yawning chasm between rhetoric and reality

Question You think there is more rhetoric than reality?

Answer It's a combination of both Mr Gujral, personally, is a good person He is a very likeable person He has established a good rapport with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif as was evidenced at the Maldives summit where I happened to be present But after that he did some U-turns, particularly with reference to occupied Kashmir For example, his offer of talks to the freedom fighters of Kashmir on which he backtracked the next day So this yawning chasm, this gap between words and deeds needs to be bridged

Question What do you think are the principal challenges before Pakistan as it enters its fiftyfirst year of freedom?

Answer Revival of the economy, a clean and competent leadership and bridging the gap between the rich and the poor These are the priorities which the Government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has set for itself In the first six months of being in office, we have given this country a tax-free budget, a corruption-free political culture and a scandal-free administration Today, we can say with authority and confidence that there is no corruption at the top levels of Pakistani leadership I think that is a very major achievement for a country which, till recently, was supposed to be the world's second most corrupt country

Question How would you look back at Pakistan's tryst with democracy?

Answer It has been a chequered tryst with democracy We have had difficulties, we have had our periods of military rule But, now we are coming of age as a nation-state with strong democratic institutions Civilian institutions are strong in today's Pakistan and there is absolutely no possibility of a return to military rule

Question Are you in a position today to become the first democratic government in fifty years to complete its tenure?

Answer I would say *insha allah* (god willing) And that is a very definitive and authoritative *insha allah*

Question As a civilian government, does the *administration carry the requisite clout with other governing institutions?*

Answer· Of course We have the biggest mandate in the history of Pakistan, we have the support of the people. We have a majority in Parliament and I think our track record in six months is quite clear So, we have absolutely no problem of that kind, vis-a-vis other institutions

Question How would you grade the problem of sectarianism and the situation in Karachi in order of priority?

Answer It's a difficult situation in certain parts of Pakistan Basically, it is related to terrorism which is being done in the name of religion It is not sectarianism, it is terrorism spawned by certain groups and gangs of criminals And it has to be treated as such These are problems which have been faced by other countries in the region as well Pakistan is no exception to that We shall certainly overcome these problems It is interesting that as soon as this government took over this problem surfaced and has now acquired a dimension of its own The government places the highest priority on combating the issue of terrorism

Question In what way would your strategy be different from that of the previous government? You are about to enact a law which would be quite severe on terrorists Is there any possibility of misuse of such a law?

Answer The previous government's main plank was different It was a two-pronged policy of coercion and corruption Ours is to provide good governance and to revive the economy So our priorities are different. We have not used the State apparatus or any law against our political opponents which is very different from the policy of the previous government

Question· In this context, there has been some criticism of the government's accountability or ehtesab *initiative? How would you respond to this criticism?*

Answer It is for the first time in the history of Pakistan that a serious accountability (process) has been initiated Money has been returned by those who looted the national exchequer Six billion rupees have been returned Naturally, those who have been hit hard by this would like to whine, cry hoarse about it Accountability is not an easy process, it is a difficult one But we are tackling it in a manner which is in consonance with the rule of law and the Constitution

Question· To get back to India, how do you think your government will leave India-Pakistan relations at the end of its term?

Answer Depends on India On whether India is serious in resolving issues The Government of Pakistan has shown its seriousness in talking to India, in initiating a dialogue with India We don't want to have a dialogue of the deaf Let us discuss the issues across the table in a serious and sober manner If India is interested only on talking about non-issues and tries to skirt the core issue of occupied Jammu and Kashmir then, in the long run, this dialogue will not make much headway

Question In the past India and Pakistan have spoken about Kashmir In fact, there have been discussions of what kind of Line of Control (LoC) there should be between Swaran Singh and Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto in the 1960s Do you think today that India and Pakistan are treading fresh ground or are they going over the old issues over and over again?

Answer No, fresh ground is being covered Previously, there were more or less technical discussions This time there is more of a political focus and we feel that there is more of an understanding on the Indian side of the need to focus on Kashmir as the core issue

Question Do you think Pakistan's insistence on Kashmir as the core issue is a stumbling block in talking about general relations between the two countries?

Answer Not at all Because Kashmir is the principal roadblock to India-Pakistan normalisation

Question Will your Government link all other issues under discussions with India to progress only on Kashmir?

Answer The term used in the (June 23, 1997) declaration of the Foreign Secretaries of both countries is integrated approach That obviously means there is an inextricable linkage among the issues You cannot divorce one and focus on the other

Question So would you say trade is as important as Jammu and Kashmir?

Answer· No, Jammu and Kashmir is more important than trade

Question But if, as you say, all the issues are integrated how do you lay stress on one and not the other?

Answer Very simple Simultaneous progress on the issues Some are economic, some are political

Question Recently, a couple of Indian trade delegations visited Pakistan and arrived at some arrangement with the local Chambers of Commerce But the Pakistani Commerce Minister has frowned on this Does this mean no progress can be made on the trade front?

Answer Substantial trade between India and Pakistan is precluded by the problem of Kashmir unless there is some progress Trade also means opening up of barriers, creating a new ambience, new environment of cooperation And that new environment cannot come about if the political and security environment is still frozen in the past because of Kashmir and the policies of the Indian Government ■

Towards a Poverty-Free World

MUHAMMAD YUNUS

The following article is based on the Lakdawala Memorial Lecture 1997 organised by the Institute of Social Sciences (New Delhi, August 8, 1997) Professor Muhammad Yunus is the founder and Managing Director of the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh, known worldwide for its pioneering success in extending bank credit to millions of people in poverty, mainly women

The fiftieth anniversary of independence of India and Pakistan gives us an appropriate occasion to raise the question Are the people of the subcontinent fated to remain poor? Fifty years have gone by, poverty has not disappeared Will it still be with us fifty years from now?

Grameen Bank

DURING the early seventies I was teaching in Chittagong University I was teaching elegant theories of economics But soon my enthusiasm for those theories started to wear off I began looking at those theories with suspicion when we were faced with a famine in Bangladesh I started feeling that there is a great distance between the reality of the poor and hungry people and the abstract world of economic theory

I wanted to learn the real life economics faced by the poor people I was lucky Chittagong University is located in the rural area It was easy for me to visit poor households in the neighbouring village Jobra almost everyday I learnt many things about their life which I would have never known had I not learned from them

I was shocked to see how poor people in Jobra suffered because they could not come up with a small amount of working capital The amount they needed was less than a dollar per person They could get that money only against extremely unfair terms They were required to sell the goods to the lender at the price set arbitrarily by him

I made a list of people who needed this kind of money I came up with a list of 42 people The total amount they needed was $27 I was shocked I could not get over it How easy it was for us to talk about millions and billions of dollars—but we pay no attention to the need of $27 for 42 able-bodied, hard-working, skilled people

I lent this money to the people on my list to help them get out of these unfair deals People who received my money were very happy Seeing how easy it was to make so many people so happy with such a small amount of money, I thought I should work out a way to find money for them on a permanent basis

I thought I should approach the bank located in the campus I did But the bank manager said they could not give loans to the poor people because they were not creditworthy I argued with him with all the best arguments I could come up with I did not succeed I met higher officials in the banking hierarchy No result Finally I offered myself as a guarantor to get the loans

In 1976 I took money from the bank and gave it to the poor people of Jobra People paid back their loans without any problem

The bank did not change its mind But I felt encouraged I was told by the bank that if I tried in two villages it would not work I tried It worked This triggered a whole series of events I kept on expanding my work from two villages to five villages, then to twenty villages, fifty villages, hundred villages to convince the bankers Every time it worked But the bankers did not want to change their mind

Since I could not change the banks I thought I should create a separate bank for the poor It was not easy either But finally in 1983 we could create Grameen Bank Today this bank works in 37,000 villages out of a total of 68,000 villages It lends to 2 1 million borrowers, 94 per cent of whom are poor women Recently, in June 1997, we crossed the US $ 2 billion mark in cumulative loans The first billion dollar mark was reached in March 1995, 18 years since it began in Jobra It took only two years to reach the second billion dollars Today, after twenty years of work, the average loan size stands at $ 160 Grameen gives income-generating loans, housing loans, and leases equipments and animals, with repayment rate of over 97 per cent The bank is owned by the borrowers Studies made on Grameen borrowers report that they have improved their income, one-third of them have crossed over the poverty line, another one-third is close to crossing the line

Self-Employment versus Wage Employment

IT is generally argued that the only way to end poverty is to create employment The policy needed for the eradication of poverty must be much wider and deeper than the policy for the provision of mere employment I believe that the real eradication of poverty begins when people are able to control their own fate Therefore, it is not work which saves the poor, but capital linked to work, which, in a majority of cases, eliminates poverty fast with a minimum or no cost at all to the taxpayer and gives the poor control over their lives

One can notice from the Grameen Bank experience that given the support of financial capital, however small, the poor are capable of bringing about an incredible change in their lives Some needed only $ 20, others a $ 100 or $ 500 Some wanted to husk paddy, some to make puffed rice, some to make earthen pots and pans while others wanted to buy cows Grameen borrowers did not receive any special training They had either already received this training as part of their household chores or had acquired the necessary skills in their field of work All they needed was financial capital

Obviously self-employment has limits, but in many cases it is the only solution to help the fate of those that our economies refuse to hire and which taxpayers do not want to carry on their shoulders Critics often say that micro-credit does not contribute to the economic development of a country Even if it does, it is insignificant

It all depends on what one likes to call economic development Is it per capita income? Per capita consumption? Or anything per capita? I always disagreed with this kind of approach in defining development I think in this approach the essence of development is missed out To me, changing the quality of life of the bottom fifty per cent of the population is the essence of development If we want to make it more rigorous, we can even define development by focussing on the quality of the bottom-most 25 per cent of the population

Quality of life is not to be decided by the size of the consumption basket or the range of choices offered to a person alone It must also include the enabling environment for individuals to explore their own creative potentials This second component of the quality of life is far more important than the first component

Grameen Phone

MICRO-CREDIT turns on the tiny economic engines among the rejected population of the society Once a large number of tiny engines start working, the stage can be set for big things

Micro-borrowers, micro-savers can be organised to own enterprises, even infrastructure companies Grameen has created a number of companies for speeding up the process of overcoming poverty Some of them are large infrastructure companies Grameen Phone is a nationwide cellular telephone company which hopes to serve about one million cellular phone users in both urban and rural areas of Bangladesh by the year 2003 Many of the Grameen women borrowers will become the telephone ladies of the villages A poor woman who never saw a telephone or even an electric bulb in her life will own a cellular phone and start selling the service of the phone to the villagers to earn better income Ultimately Grameen borrowers will become the owners of the telephone company itself by buying up the shares, as they did in the case of Grameen Bank

Grameen has created another infrastructure company—Grameen Cybernet This is an Internet service provider in the country It will extend its services in the rural areas when Grameen Phone covers the villages with telephone network Internet will bring global job market to the remote villages Young boys and girls from poor families will not have to rush to cities to find jobs They will find international jobs which they will attend from their villages Bright boys and girls will get world-class education through internet Again the company itself will be owned by the poor

Many villages (almost 65 per cent) in Bangladesh do not have grid electricity Grameen has created Grameen Shakti or Grameen energy to bring solar and other renewable energy into these villages to power cellular phones, lights, radios, televisions and computers Grameen Shakti will work through creating micro power companies owned and operated by the local poor

In a conventional development strategy, power plans, telecommunication and other infrastructure are either owned by the richest in the country or the multinationals, or both, and serve their interest Grameen and micro-credit may lead the way to think differently, and hopefully act differently—in a poor friendly way

Is Skill the Barrier?

WE have gone against traditional methods of poverty alleviation by first handing out cash without any attempt at giving skill training But why credit first?

It is because I firmly believe that all human beings have an innate skill I call it the survival skill The fact that the poor are alive is a clear proof of their ability They do not need us to teach them how to survive, they already know this So rather than waste our time teaching them new skills, we decided to make maximum use of their existing skills Giving the poor access to credit allows them an ability immediately to put into practice the skills they already know—to weave, husk rice paddy, raise cows, peddle a rickshaw And the cash they earn is then a tool, a key that unlocks a host of other abilities, a key to explore one's own potential

A huge industry has evolved worldwide, thanks to the aid-flow and welfare budget, for the sole purpose of providing training Experts of poverty alleviation keep on insisting that training is absolutely vital for the poor to move up the economic ladder But if you go out in the real world you cannot miss seeing that the poor are poor not because they are untrained or illiterate They are poor because they cannot retain the genuine returns to their labour The reason for this is obvious—they have no control over capital that calls the tune The poor work for the benefit of someone who controls the capital

This is not to say that training, per se, is bad Training is extremely important for helping people to get over their economic difficulties faster and surer But, do not put the cart before the horse Let people's natural abilities blossom before you come and blind it off with your well-researched, well-intentioned elaborate structure Do not force it on them because you feel that they need it Help create the situation when they start feeling the need for it, start looking for it, and are willing to pay, even if it is a token amount (instead of getting paid for receiving it)

Economics missed out Poverty Issue

ECONOMISTS recognise only one kind of employment—wage employment In their book there is nothing called self-employment Economists have created a world for us where we are supposed to spend our childhood and part of our youth in working hard to prepare ourselves to be attractive to potential employers When our preparation is complete we present ourselves in the job market to get hired If someone cannot find an employer, real trouble begins She or he ends up in the welfare world in industrial economies, in poverty and misery in the less developed economies

The idea of a young person working hard to make himself/herself useful to an employer appears very repulsive to me A human life is too precious to be wasted away in preparation for finding an employer—and then devote the entire life in serving the employer

Economics textbooks have no use for the word 'self-employment' That is what created trouble in real life Just because the textbooks banished this word, policy-makers banished it from their mind too Opening up opportunities for self-employment by creating appropriate institutions and policies is the best strategy for eliminating unemployment and poverty

The intellect and enthusiasm of the economists were directed towards enquiring the causes of the wealth of nations They continued exploring more and more in the same direction without ever asking themselves the question of the causes of the poverty of individual human beings

Whatever attention is given to poverty, it comes under so-called development economics But development economics remained basically as an after-thought or re-interpretation of the main body of economic theories in the context of the newly independent countries

Shortcomings of the core theories remained unrepaired I think these shortcomings came from several directions Firstly, I feel the micro-economic theory—which plays the central role in the analytical framework of economics, is incomplete In this theory an individual human being is introduced as a consumer in the consumer theory, and as a labour in the production theory Production theory starts with production function, that is, given a technology how an entrepreneur can mix labour and capital to produce different levels of production This leads to the theory of a firm

These conceptualisations completely eliminated the possibility of self-employment Entrepreneurs were considered a specially gifted group of people The rest of the human beings are born to serve under them This, perhaps, appeared to the economists as an innocent piece of abstraction But this did a great damage to economics as a social science Creativity and ingenuity of each human being are abstracted away With that the possibility of each human being turning into an entrepreneur disappeared Wage-employment became the only source of employment Self-employment was explained away as a symptom of a poor economy

To me, any academic discipline to be qualified as social science must create an analytical framework which will enable and encourage human beings to explore their unlimited potentials, and not start with the assumption that their capacity is given and limited, and their roles fixed

By missing the lively world of self-employment, economics has moved away from the promise it held to become an exciting social science Instead, more and more, it grew as a business science

With self-employment gone, economics missed another very important social dimension, the family—man, woman, and children It always amazed me how economics can get away by calling itself social science without ever getting involved with the social dimensions of men, women, and children, and their inter-relationships at household level and at the macro-level

With a theory of self-employment integrated in the micro-economic theory, economists could easily enter into issues of poverty, development, family, population gender, and build socially powerful theories in other areas (such as, banking, entitlement of resources, etc) In many of the third world countries the overwhelming majority of people make a living through self-employment Not knowing where to fit this phenomenon in the analytical framework the economists lumped this up in a category called 'informal sector' Just because they do not have analytical tools to cope with this situation they concluded that this is not a desirable situation, as soon as these countries eliminate this informal sector, better off they would be

Instead of supporting the creativity and energy of the people by creating, enabling and empowering policies and institutions, we become eager to fit them into boxes that we created Informal sector is the creation of the people, not of planners or economists This is people's effort to create their own jobs Anyone with minimum understanding of people and society would have come forward with hope and excitement to build upon on what exists, take it to higher levels, bring more efficiency into it, rather than pull the rug under it

Credit that discredits Economics

ANOTHER area in which the economic theory has played a damaging role is on the issue of credit Economics completely disqualifies itself as a social science when it comes to its treatment of credit It is very surprising that economics never understood the social power of credit In economic theory credit is seen as an innocent lubricant It lubricates the wheels of trade, commerce and industry

The fact that credit creates entitlement to resources, could have immediately triggered the thought that in the social context it will play a very significant and sensitive role Economics has missed to catch it

Since credit creates economic power, and hence social power, the institution which is responsible for deciding who should and should not get credit, when should one get credit, who should get how much and at what terms, becomes very important socially This institution can really make or break an individual, group of individuals, or even a whole segment of the society by favouring them or by rejecting them

That is what exactly it has done It made rules which favoured a section of the people and rejected another section Those who are favoured continue to rise in power and those who are rejected languish in poverty It decided that it can do business only with the rich

Why have economists remained silent when banks insisted on the ridiculous and extremely harmful generalisation that the poor are not creditworthy? Nobody can give a convincing answer Because of this silence, financial institutions impose financial apartheid without anybody ever daring to point fingers at them If economics was to be built as a genuine social science, economists would have discovered what a powerful socio-economic weapon credit is They would have recognised the need to promote credit as a human right, and would have designed a system to ensure this human right for all people as social scientists Economists would have detected how credit gave the society a particular structure, or at least how credit could have prevented the society from having an undesirable structure If we can redesign economics as a genuine social science, we will be firmly on our way to create a poverty-free world

Self-fulfilling Prophecy

SOMEHOW we have persuaded ourselves that capitalist economy must be fuelled only by greed Since we all believe that way, it became a self-fulfilling prophecy Only profit-maximisers went to play in the marketplace and try their luck Those who are not excited about profit-making stayed away from it, condemned it, and kept looking for alternatives

We can condemn the private sector for all its mistakes, but we cannot justify why we ourselves are not trying to change things, not trying to make things better by participating in it The private sector, unlike the government, is open to everyone, even to those who are not interested in making profit

I profoundly believe, and Grameen's experience over twenty years has shown, that greed is not the only fuel for free enterprise Social goals can replace greed as a powerful motivational force Social-consciousness-driven enterprises can be formidable competitors for the greed-based enterprises I believe if we play our cards right, social-consciousness-driven enterprises can become an effective force in the marketplace

I see the room and the need for creation of a completely new sector—social-consciousness-driven private sector Who will do it? Of course, social-consciousness-driven people Social-consciousness can be as burning, even more burning, a desire as greed in an individual human being Why not make room for those people to play in the marketplace to solve social problems and lead human lives on a higher and higher plane of peace, equity, and creativity

The public sector has failed Or at least it is on the way out despite our best efforts Bureaucratisation cushioned by subsidies, economic and political protection, and lack of transparency killed it off It became an attractive playground of corruption, for lack of accountability What started out with good intentions became a road to perdition With the demise of the public sector the only thing left for the world is greed-based private sector

Social Benefit and Financial Viability

I believe in the central thesis of capitalism—the economic system has to be competitive Competition is the driving force for all innovations, technological changes and better management

Another central feature of capitalism is profit maximisation Profit maximisation ensures the optimal use of scarce resources This is the feature of capitalism which led us to create the image of a greedy (almost blood-thirsty) person in the role of a profit maximiser We have taken away all the social feelings from him Then we postulated that the true entrepreneurs are a rare and special breed We are lucky to have them with us We feel so grateful to them that we give them all the privileges we can afford—credit, social recognition, tax holidays, priority access to land, market protection, etc

I am proposing two changes to this feature of capitalism The first change relates to the image of an entrepreneur To me, an entrepreneur is not a specially gifted person I rather take the reverse view I believe that all human beings are potential entrepreneurs Some of us get the opportunity to express this talent, and others never take a chance to try it out because of the way we were made to imagine about an entrepreneur If all of us accept everybody as a potential entrepreneur then we will move to build an economic system which will allow each man or woman to explore this potential The old and intransigent wall between the capitalist and the labour will disappear It will become a choice fo a person whether she or he wants to be a capitalist or a labourer The individual's role in the economy will not be a foregone conclusion decided by birth or circumstances beyond his/her control

The second change relates to how an entrepreneur comes to an investment decision Economic theory depicts him only as a profit maximiser As a result, the social dimension in his thinking has been completely bypassed For social science, this is not a good starting point Even if the presence of social consideration is a very small one in the investment decision of an entrepreneur, we should have allowed it to come into play for the better interest of the society Social considerations in a human being are qualities which can be inculcated by generating appropriate social values If we leave no room for them in our theoretical framework we will be forcing ourselves to create human beings without social values

Indeed, market will need decision rules for efficient allocation of resources I am proposing that we replace the narrow profit maximisation principle by a generalised principle—an entrepreneur maximises a bundle consisting of two components (a) profit, and (b) social returns, subject to the condition that profit cannot be negative

Investment decisions will be taken within a range of options In one extreme it will be guided purely by profit motive In the other extreme, an entrepreneur will continue to be in the market as long as the enterprise is financially viable He or she will choose that particular financially viable enterprise, which, in his/her perception or estimate, yields the maximum social returns

Under this principle, an entrepreneur will run a health-care service for the poor, if it is financially viable Other such enterprises may be financial services for the poor, food chain for the poor, educational institutions, training centres, renewable energy ventures, old-age homes, institutions for handicapped people, recycling enterprises, marketing of products produced by the poor, etc

Will this type of social-consciousness-driven entrepreneurs be rare people to find? I do not think so The more we would look for them, the more we will meet them, and the more we will make it easy for a person to become one Wouldn't you like to become one? Or wish to be a partner with someone who is looking for a partner?

Socially-Friendly Economy

I assume that the society is made up of all kinds of people On one extreme, there are blood-thirsty capitalists who want to maximise profit alone, without any social considerations They would not mind investing in an enterprise which creates negative social returns, as long as it yields maximum profit

On the other extreme, there exists entrepreneurs who are driven solely by social consciousness They are happy to invest if it maximises social returns only, as long as the enterprise is financially viable

In between these two extremes, the bulk of the entrepreneurs mix these two considerations, profit and social considerations, in a way which takes them to their highest level of self-fulfilment Through various means of social recognitions and rewards societies can attract more and more entrepreneurs to move in the direction of social-consciousness-driven investments

Specialised institutions can be created to help generate more and more social-consciousness-driven investments An individual entrepreneur can run an enterprise which has some or no attention to social returns, but can initiate and operate one or more financially viable enterprises devoted exclusively to maximise social returns, either as an individual or as a part of a trust or not-for-profit business organisation

This vision is not only closer to real life, but it also creates room for creating socially and environmentally friendly economy globally, and within nations

We are the Crew

WILL it be possible to create a poverty-free world in the next century? We refer to "next century" as if we are talking about next 24 hours Next century means next one hundred years I do not think anybody has any knowledge or wisdom to predict what will happen to the world and its inhabitants during the next one hundred years The world now is changing in unpredictable ways and would continue to do so All we can say that the speed of changes will be faster and faster—it will never slow down If we take all the accumulated knowledge, discoveries, inventions that went on up to the end of the twentieth century, in the following fifty years alone perhaps it will grow several fold

The real question is whether these changes will take the human beings towards a desired goal, or lead them to an unavoidable disaster The answer is obvious If we consider ourselves as passengers in this spaceship called earth—we will find ourselves riding in a pilotless, routemapless, destinationless journey If we can convince ourselves that we are actually the crew of this spaceship and we are here to take this ship to a specific socio-economic and ethical destination then we will continue to approach this destination, even if we make mistakes along the way or are forced to make detours We need to know the destination—if not in a precise way, at least in a broad way

Where would we like the world to be in the next fifty years? I would like to see a world free from poverty In that world there will not be a single human being who may be described as a poor person The word 'poverty' will not have any current relevance It would be understood only with reference to the past The only place you can see poverty will be in a museum When schoolchildren will be on tour of the poverty museum, they will be horrified to see the misery and indignity of human beings They will blame their forefathers for tolerating this inhuman condition to continue in a massive way until the early part of the twentyfirst century

A Matter of Will

I always feel that eliminating poverty from the world is a matter of will, rather than finding ways and means We really do not pay serious attention to the issue of poverty It is because we ourselves are not personally involved in it We are not poor We distance ourselves from the issue by saying that if the poor worked harder they would not be poor

When we want to help the poor, we offer them charity Most often we use the charity window to avoid recognising the problem and find a solution for it Charity becomes a way to shrug off our responsibility This goes for both state charity and personal charity Charity is no solution to poverty Charity only perpetuates poverty by taking away the initiative from the poor Charity allows us to get ahead with our own lives without worrying about other people's lives Our conscience gets adequately soothened by charity But the real issue is creating a level playing field for everybody, giving every human being a fair and equal chance

New Institutions, New Opportunities

We will be seeing faster and faster changes as we move along Faster changes will need faster creation of new institutions to make use of the new opportunities

Changes are products of intensive efforts Intensity of efforts depends on the felt need and resources that are mobilised to bring the changes desired In a greed-based free-market economy, obviously, the bulk of the changes will be greed-driven These changes may not be always socially desirable Socially desired changes may not be attractive from the greed perspective

PAPERS INVITED

State Politics in India : Comparative Analysis

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This is where social-objective-driven organisations are needed The state and civil society must provide the support of financial and other resources behind these organisations These organisations will continually devote their attention and R&D money in those areas of innovations, adaptations and developments in technology which will facilitate achieving social goals They will also monitor the greed-driven developments in technology to see that these technologies do not lead societies towards undesirable directions

Barriers to Movement

Another 'access' we should ensure is access to market All barriers and protections around markets must disappear

Economic protectionism, subsidies and doles were instituted by well-meaning people to soften capitalism's hard edges Protections are built in the name of the poor, but the real beneficiaries of protectionism are the rich and clever people who know how to manipulate the system

The poor have a better chance in a bigger market, not in a small protected market If we can ensure free flow of commodities, finances and people—everybody will be benefited, not just the poor It does not make sense to build high walls around the border of our countries Passports and visas did not exist one century ago This is a twentieth-century phenomenon Let us leave these behind with the century which invented it Let us pride in our human identity above all other identities We will definitely wave our national flags, celebrate our regional, national, racial, local, religious, political, and cultural heritage, but not to offend others or to claim anyone's supremacy over any other It would be to glorify the unity of mankind strengthened and sharpened through friendly competition of cultures and other diversities

Poverty not created by the Poor

It is the responsibility of any civilised society to ensure human dignity to each and every member of that society, and make sure that each and every member gets the best opportunity to reveal his/her creativity

Poverty is not created by the poor, it is created by the institutions we have built and the policies that we pursue We cannot solve the problem of poverty with the same concepts and tools which created it in the first place To create a poverty-free world we need a new conceptualisation, a new analytical framework which makes ensuring dignity to every human being its central task ■

Mainstream

August 23, 1997

Fifty years of Freedom :
Where are the Children ?

Essays in defence of the child

Freedom for Children

"Children are my life", said the man who guided India to the doorstep of freedom Those with a sense of history would see that the freedom was meant to the exercised, even more than by adults, by or on behalf of children, for they are the most dynamic dimension of the national community with the greatest potential to develop

India could not have started on a totally clean state on 15 August 1947 but we were to begin a new chapter, befitting the civilizational ideals of our 5000-year recorded post Where do they stand, some 370 million children under 15 years in today's India? *Mainstream* has made an effort, in the following pages, to find a sensitive answer

Are children, and the rest of us, better off now than 50 years ago? Yes, a good number are - with more education, easier mobility, faster communication, modern health care, more material support to life But, the many are not, those in poverty and the layers immediately above it Even by official estimates, the absolute number of the socalled 'poor' in India today — some 320 million or so — is not very different from the total population size in the post-partition India of 1947 If we add to this, those hovering above the poverty line, half our people are in need of social support, often desperately so Among them, children are more numerous and more vulnerable than women or men

Those who have cared to know inform us that only a fraction of the nearly 30 million children born in India each year live to attain anywhere near their natural potential of physical and mental growth The support they receive in moral and spiritual terms must be meagre, if the evident deterioration in the quality of human relations is any indication

Such is the consequence of 'poverty which only the callous would be content to define in monetary terms of household income The inconvenient truth is that the socio-economic system, with its political handmaidens, is regularly reproducing poverty in its many forms Yet our people, and their children work and play, braving adversity with an equanimity born of inner strength

Freedom and equality, camaraderie and laughter belong naturally to children, as their birthright Instead of imbibing these virtues from them we adults teach them, mainly by example, not necessarily to read, write, think and act creatively, but to fear and to hate to evade truth and hardwork What is as bad we deny them, by design or default, basic nourishment of mind and body, exploiting them as labour, even as saleable commodities To such attitude and behaviour, the state and society are mute witnesses

There is yet some democratic urge for change I happened to see a central government publication, only a few weeks old, upholding an updated social strategy for *community action*, across conventional sectors and led by local groups of impoverished women within organized communities — against poverty and in support of the vulnerable, especially children I should be pleasantly surprised if the Rural Development department is willing and able to carry this move to its logical goal, by persuading sister ministries and state chief ministers to transfer real power to the 'gram sabha', to guide, supervise and control the local government The biggest obstacle to democratic change is the entrenched tendency of elected politicians and appointed bureaucrats to rule over people—even as they pay routine homage to human, women's and children's rights

Nikhil Chakravartty

Child Rights

State Obligation and Social Responsibility

Rajindar Sachar

This paper seeks to offer a layman's guide to an area of benign neglect, which also happens to be central to India's democratic future.

There could be many reasons why influential segments who shape public opinion are largely uninterested in human rights, even less exercised over children's or women's rights. To an extent this might be a defeatist reaction to the specious use of the concept of human rights as a cover to the pursuit of commercial or political self-interest. There is of course calculated or routine violations by the state itself. Calling the powerful to account is a crucial task in defence of human rights.

Of no less concern is the apparent indifference to what happens to others who are victims of human rights violations, so long as it does not happen to oneself. This is a moral as well as practical issue. We could build legal obligations, but the primary character of human rights is moral. I would suggest that at the root of the concept of human rights is not so much any social philosophy or political ideology as "the primordial sorrow at what man does to man knowingly or unknowingly". And this impulse is a good enough start for respecting, protecting and fulfilling the rights of the child.

The institutions of society—be they organised communities, socio-political organisations or governments—are by definition obliged to defend and support the weak and the vulnerable. A clear expression or such obligation of the state and of the responsibility of society is what has lately come to be called, in legal terms, the Rights of the Child.

As a child can only cry and not exactly fight for his or her right (as an adult individual or group might, for example, against the state or other tormentor). The role of social conscience and social action therefore becomes all the more imperative on behalf of the child. But this function is hardly being fulfilled in any organised manner in India today — with disastrous but avoidable consequences to successive generations of children. For instance, those who have had the good fortune of having been educated, seldom care even to find out the legal obligations of the state towards children as contained in the Indian constitution, not to speak about the international treaties and covenants to which India is a signatory. It is therefore a relief that common people, peasants and workers in our villages, still maintain a culturally-rooted and spiritually nourished capacity to discriminate between right and wrong and, when necessary, to subordinate the self voluntarily to the larger interest of the community. This reflects, despite aberrations, one of the better traditions of an old, and almost uninterrupted civilization, namely a caring society centred naturally on the family where adults looked after children and children respected their elders and cared for their parents.

In this perspective, there is little that is basically new or alien to the Indian ethos in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989 and ratified by India in 1992. There is a healthy overlap of concerns and concepts between the Convention and Constitution (for instance article 24 on employing children, articles 39e and 39f on child protection, and article 45 on free and compulsory elementary education). Evidently, the vision represented by these aims is a long way ahead, even after 50 years of freedom.

I would like to believe that the Indian Constitution was influenced—among other inspiring sources including several of India's own—by the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which preceded almost by a year, and which was tempered by the still fresh memories of mass slaughter and devastation across the world, especially of the young lives lost and the futures blighted. The point does not have to be laboured that our constitution has not worked, for whatever reason, the way it was intended to work. We have been repeatedly reminded, through these five decades, that there is no greater waste in life, either in magnitude or intensity, than the colossal waste of human talent that still goes on for want of education and health, economic security and community solidarity. This is hardly a firm foundation for a maturing democracy.

On precisely this point, I recall the view expressed by a group of social activists in the allied fields of human development and human rights, led by Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, during 1988, in an appeal to both government and public opinion to participate actively in the making of the child rights convention. "We have no illusions about a ne convention, by itself changing th situation of children dramatically Parallel steps are needed to reshape national laws and structures, to release adequate resources to self-relant communities, to relate the fruits of science to the basic needs of children and to enhance public awareness to the point of a change in culture But a Convention on the Rights of the Child can be a legal lever using which the family and the community can defend and exercise children's rights on their behalf"

Now that the convention is an international treaty entered into by India, a number of measures await to be taken, without further delay, to spread and deepen awareness, to monitor and redress violations and steadily to create social conditions and government capacity to prevent violations For this to happen, the centre of gravity must shift from the rarefied ambience of central and state bureaucracies to the realities of daily living But before we come to that, child rights as a concept must be rescued from an attitude which views them as an abstraction, in order to stimulate a rights-based process of development of, and for children

It is too late in the day for governments, international agencies and others in the field to work solely in terms of providing supplies or services, according to policies, plans and programmes, budgets, targets and schedules that suit them more than the interests of children and communities receiving such attention If we take democracy seriously, children (as well as adults) have a right to develop and therefore to necessary social support Needs have to be met, not as charity but as a matter of right With support from the rest of society, at the local, provincial, national or international levels In such an approach, the process of development is conceived, planned, implemented and monitored in a manner radically different from the conventional paternalistic mode There would be concern for quality and sustainability of the process as much as for focused and timely results The autonomy of the individual child or adult is a key issue Individual and group self-reliance would not be compromised The community as a whole would be willing and ready to pay the price for this second struggle for social and economic freedom—a struggle that has begun only sporadically on the initiative of scattered socially conscious development workers

India had acted on this liberating option more seriously than now during the 1930s and the 40s But after the coming of freedom we were taken over, as it were, by another culture, from the clutches of which we are yet to be released Here again, we can be saved only by our own effort, from the dependence and fragmentation generated by the presently dominant 'design' of development

Human rights including child rights are an indivisible cluster A rights-based approach is therefore an integral, human-centred process There is documented experience to show that this is feasible only in a community context It is time that democratic India took a conscious collective decision to break away from centralised, impersonal programmes in which public functionaries are not even clear in their minds why they work for the well being of others

Many measures can be taken to ensure that child rights are not overlooked by adults in the daily decisions they take The most important step obviously is to raise the awareness of the local community This is an area calling for political consensus and concerted action, led by motivated volunteers, who are present in any community The government's role is not to take over this function but to avoid becoming an obstacle in the way School teachers must learn about human and child rights Government functionaries, at least in the social sector, should acquire a knowledge of human rights which will ensure that their actions do not violate the rights Every university graduate should be compulsorily asked to spend a few months living and interacting with village and slum communities with a view to build development consciousness based on human rights The mass media, which is presently dedicated to middle class values beneath a liberal veneer, must be persuaded to have staff trained in human and child rights issues in relation to human development Young lawyers should pull together to help realign national laws to conform to the child rights convention and other human rights treaties

A change in development culture will not happen overnight It will also need the supportive framework of a social philosophy to which different schools of opinion could relate, some of them maybe with an effort For that to happen, we must test our own personal philosophy against a simple principle *The community is ultimately responsible for the well-being of its every member,* except that in the case of the child the responsibility is immediate

Mr Rajindar Sachar was Chief Justice, Delhi High Court and president, People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), New Delhi

Child Nutrition

Building quality into life

C Gopalan

My generation of nutrition scientists was motivated by the belief that political independence would lead, step by step, to increasing physical and mental capability of all our people Liberating the full human potential is very much a matter of scientifically valid organized action to overcome the entrenched and emerging factors of malnutrition As real freedom makes the fruits of science combine with the resources of nature, and brings them within people's reach, their inherent will and strength to manage and enhance their, as well as their children's lives, finds creative expression This process has indeed progressed with significant results over the past 50 years, partly from the benefits of such aggregate economic growth as has been achieved and partly as a result of small impoverished communities coming together to pool their meagre resources to tame many-faced poverty, poverty has much the same roots as malnutrition Unfortunately, though not unexpectedly, this positive effort with a social purpose has not so far spread to a social scale This truth is illustrated by a glaring example of the condition of life as it first appears, by tracing the preceding links in the chain of causes and by assessing the consequences that follow

Consider the incidence of what is called '*low birth weight*' It is defined, by general acceptance, as falling below 2 5 kilograms With such data as are available, it is roughly estimated that upto a third of all infants born in India are of sub-standard birth weight. India's unflattering proportion is more than in the case of most developing countries, not to speak of the industrialised nations In the latter, a marginal occurrence of low birth weight is on account of babies being born before full term, which is attributable mainly to obstetric factors in individual mothers In India, the great majority of infants born with low birth weights are not 'pre-term', but full-term infants, small for gestational age The implications of this situation go far beyond just the lightness of weight at the time of birth

Low birthweight in full term infants is a reflection of retarded growth during pregnancy, arising in most cases from impaired maternal health and nutrition In industrialised countries low birthweight is by and large a "*clinical*" problem that concerns mainly the obstetrician and the neonatologist In a context like India's, it is a *public health problem* of the first order, a human development challenge which should engage not only the specialisms just mentioned but a spectrum of professionals and policy-makers, supporting families in their own communities in the search for saner alternatives to internationally aided currently dominant 'developmental' approaches

The profile of even those infants not falling in the 'low birth weight' category is not re-assuring either The mean birthweight of the 30 million or so babies born annually at present is estimated at 2 6 to 2 7 kg This is significantly lower than, say, in Thailand, Indonesia or Sri Lanka The meaning is clear In India upto 10 million children are born each year with low birth weight, and a similar number with a birth weight barely above the minimum standard What is even more disquieting is that the two indices — the high proportion of children with low birth weight and the depressed mean birth weight — have changed but little through the 50 years of our freedom

Not many of us recognize or remember that well over 50 percent of India's children under 5 years are substantially stunted or wasted (severe plus moderate malnutrition, in technical terms) This is almost twice the rate reported in sub Saharan African countries and accounts for some 60 million malnourished children under 5 years in our country On the extent to which these girls and boys catch up on the missed growth and development in subsequent years, we can only make indirect inferences, for example heights and weights of mothers-to-be

Understandably, we take comfort in the almost steady decline in infant and child mortality from the frightful pre-Independence levels, but we need also to remind ourselves that the levels (reached mainly through control of childhood diseases) are still unacceptably high in the northern states and for India as a whole, by any international comparison Equally, '*child survival*' does not necessarily imply child health or nutrition The lower the birth weight the higher the risk of infant or child mortality Also, progress in mere terms of child survival, without adequate concurrent steps to ensure health and nutrition of the survivors — and of the mothers on whom child-bearing and child-rearing depend — will only lead to an expansion of the existing vast pool of substandard survivors, causing a further erosion of the quality of human life In the struggle for child health and nutrition, there is no half-way house between premature death and sound physical and mental health

This point merits elaboration The distance in the developmental journey that has to be traversed between the point of achievement of better child survival and optimal health and nutrition, represents the crucial transitional phase of development — which will make the difference between an underdeveloped and a developed society This transition cannot wait but is actually taking too long When a society is seriously concerned about the human quality of its future, child nutrition becomes central to national policy and even more to social action, rather than remain as at present, another compartment in government planning and development administration

Studies show that there are limits to reversing the consequences of low birth weight for the growth and development of those who survive through childhood For instance they showed significant growth retardation as reflected in lower body weights, heights and head circumferences, in comparison with children of the same age who had started off with normal weights at birth Low birth weights were also reflected in delayed skeletal growth and malnutrition in children between 6 and 10 years of age and in impaired immuno-competence Infants with low birth weight tended to show retardation in motor, adaptive, personal, social and language development in the first five years of life Further, while *pre-term* infants with low birth weight generally caught up on growth and development in early infancy, which helped to overcome their initial disadvantage, *full-term* infants with low birth weight showed persistent evidence of retardation of growth and development There is, in any case, no conclusive proof that the ill-effects of nutritional deprivation during pregnancy (during the crucial intra-uterine phase of growth) can be completely erased and overcome through intensive post-natal rehabilitation—even if that is feasible to be arranged in the living context of the majority of people in India

We are thus obliged to *'return to the mother'* in her own family and community And that takes us to the causes of low-birth weight and therefore to the health and nutrition of the mother Here, we draw inferences, in the light of present knowledge, as much from regional differences in incidence of low birth weight as from specific studies on maternal factors contributing to poor intra-uterine growth

It is well-known that the quality of health care, female literacy rate and acceptance of family planning vary widely between different states of India Kerala in the south and Uttar Pradesh in the north are at the ends of the spectrum Incidence of low birth weight is the lowest, and mean birth weight the highest in Kerala

The specific maternal factors that may be expected to contribute to intra-uterine growth retardation may be considered in the following overlapping categories (1) Poor height and weight, body mass index (BMI = weight/height^2) has been suggested as a useful criterion for assessing risk of low birth weight in the off-spring (2) Low age at marriage (>18 years in Thailand, SriLanka and Kerala and an average of 13 8 years in India's Hindi belt) (3) Anaemia of pregnancy (87 percent of pregnant women in India are anaemic with haemoglobin levels less than 11 gram percent, 13 percent with less than 8 grams percent) (4) Widespread maternal undernutrition (5) Heavy work and lack of rest in the last trimester of pregnancy (6) Infections and (7) Shorter duration of even the full-term gestation (37-38 weeks as against 40 weeks)

The World Health Organization had proposed, on the basis of world-wide data, that women with heights less than 145 cm and preconception body weights less than 38 kg, may be considered to fall in the high risk category, likely to suffer obstetric complications and give birth to babies with low birth weight, especially in situations where antenatal care and obstetric services are inadequate According to available data, 15 to 29 percent of adult Indian women in 10 States of India have bodyweights below 38 kg, and 12 to 25 percent among them heights less than 145 cm These are lower than most other countries in Asia

What makes this depressing picture even worse is that a high proportion of Indian women become mothers well before they reach adulthood, making them even more vulnerable to obstetric risks as well as low birth weight, than would have been the case had they waited till adulthood to become mothers While the age at marriage is showing a slowly increasing trend, a good proportion of pregnancies in India today are of teenagers Even with the existing levels of poverty, undernutrition and inadequate health care, a significant impact on the problem of low birth wight can be achieved through a rise in age of marriage of girls

A finding of practical significance is that if stunted women could be helped to achieve a substantial increase in body weight during pregnancy, low birth weight in the offspring can be avoided While stunting in the present generation of mothers cannot be corrected through nutrition support, antenatal care and improved nutrition during pregnancy can result in significant gains in birth weight

During pregnancy, nutrient requirements of women increase significantly, in order to meet the extra demands for growth of fetus and for expansion of maternal tissues and fat stores, though there is possibly some degree of hormonally mediated metabolic adaptation in pregnancy From the already depressed nutrient intake of most non-pregnant women, increases during pregnancy are, as a rule, either absent or negligible In fact, in a few cases, there is a tendency towards decreased 'food' intake during pregnancy

While the 'energy cost" of pregnancy is rightly emphasized, availability of essential intake of iron, folic acid, vitamin A, riboflavin, ascorbic acid, all of which are inadequate even in the non-pregnant state, are even more so during pregnancy These and other nutrient deficiencies, such as of iodine and zinc have a bearing on the development of the child being born.Ongoing research points to the possibility of increased susceptibility to degenerative diseases in adult life, apart from compromised physical growth and mental development in the short term, as a consequence of nutritional deprivation during pregnancy

We are today witness to a vicious cycle of stunted mothers giving birth to girls of low birth weight who, because of the permanent damage suffered by them from intra-uterine growth retardation, fall into a substandard growth and development category, ending up as stunted mothers At stake is nothing short of the quality of our large and growing population

If in the measurable future, we are to break out of this tight noose, we need to begin at the very beginning and support the adolsecent girl, who will become a mother sooner than later She has to be prepared for life, not just for motherhood, through an inter-related cluster of support measures like health and nutrition education, vocational training, monetary incentive for deferred marriage, selection and engagement as community-level workers in child care and nutrition, maternal and child health, hygiene and environmental conservation, and a variety of services that the community needs but the goverment cannot provide reality or adequately Today, there is no more than a token policy recognition of the pressing need for support during adolescence, a phase of life that has been habitually neglected

What has been the response, in policy and on the ground, to this national challenge? We have, since 1993, a national nutrition policy, which states, in well-worn language what needs to be done, and in vague terms, how The 'who', and with what means, are less than clear Examples of the policy directions adequate food production, food security, increase in the production of legumes and coarse grains, improving purchasing power, ensuring a minimum wage, land reforms, health and nutrition education, better nutrition surveillance, raising the status of women, improved access to health care, community participation, communication and social mobilization, monitoring and evaluation

It is as if development cannot happen without nutrition and nutrition cannot improve without development It is much the same syndrome as in the case of poverty reduction How do we break out of this stalemate of sectors, strategies and structures? The Approach Paper to the ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) should have given us a clue, but it is more of the same centralised bureaucratic medicine If inter-sectoral cooperation is the answer, it can happen only where the action is, where the poor communities live, in village and slum If nutritional improvement requires simultaneous action on different fronts—providing energy, protein and nutrients, education and support for disease prevention and control, care during pregnancy and early childhood and a clean and safe environment, with household economic security undergirding the effort, these streams can possibly converge only at the community level, in the family People's nutrition, for good or ill, is in their hands The political decision to devolve to them the power to decide, including the technical, organizational and financial support as necessary, if taken in principle is yet to be translated through the local-government channel to all those in need in the local community

I see a glimmer at the end of the tunnel Recent trends in nutritional status of children and women have been positive but modest—despite a steep increase in population and continuing and pronounced social, educational and economic inequalities The improvements, though small, were achieved in the context of a substantial decline in child mortality, which means that most malnourished children who would have died are being saved The challenge today is to accelerate the pace

The near total disappearance of florid nutritional deficiencies—beri-beri, pellagra, kwashiorkor and marasmus, and the sharp reduction in keratomalacia, reinforce optimism At the same time, with the possible exception of reduction in iodine deficiency disorders (as a result of having so far iodised some 70 percent of edible salt), none of the positive changes can be credited to specific "nutritional intervention *programmes*", but rather to general improvement in the economic, health and dietary status of impoverished communities Thus no particular drug or vitamin was used to combat beri-beri or pellagra, kwashiorkar was not controlled through protein-concentrates and the declining trend of keratomalacia started even before the massive dosage of vitamin A prophylaxis was instituted The alarming reports of some international agencies, which have placed India at about the bottom rung of an arbitrary world development scale, should not divert us from the paramount need for an all round community-based, professionally supported, integrated—rather than a narrow drug-based, donor-driven approach towards combating malnutrition There is no way other than to loosen the multiple 'environmental' constraints that hinder children from expressing to the full their own genetic endowment

Such then are the signs and hopes that things may be on the mend The government, whatever its political complexion, cannot, in the light of the painful lessons of the past 50 years, presume or pretend that it "provides" nutrition to those who cannot arrange for it by themselves The "nutrition initiative" must pass from the hands of the bureaucracy to the impoverished, often illiterate community They know better their needs Most of the nutritional resources they need are available—some actually in use, some not accessible to them If it were otherwise, they would not have survived cheerfully as hardworking people, despite deterring daily adversity

What is expected of a democratic government, necesssarily at the local level, is to assist people, technically and financially, to analyse and understand the nature of their nutritional and related problems and to shape responses using as far as possible local resources We have a reasonable base of tested knowledge and methods but not yet the stategies and structures to apply them We have a resource-rich country managed without much understanding or compassion For example, we need to outgrow obsolete definitions like "food security" if we are serious about nutrition and concerned not just about 'hunger' Cereal production and fair-priced supply are important but will not meet our nutritional deficits The multiple resources—a rich variety of vegetables, fruits, nuts and animal products—put to effective use by traditional communities—are being overlooked by elected governments as well as the trend-setters, often on the prompting of quick-fix international 'development' agencies in unthinking haste The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), for instance, calls for radical restructuring to place an aware and active community at the centre of the scheme Governments, like international agencies, assess nutritional problems form their own limited perspective, what they can do, how much, at what cost and for how long But it cannot be assumed that they are more concerned or capable in relation to a child's nutrition than the child's mother, the family and the community, and their own local government, once awareness is awakened

Dr C Gopalan is President Nutrition Foundation of India New Delhi Formerly, he was Director, National Institute of Nutrition and Director-General, Indian Council of Medical Research

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Child Health

Independence at crossroads

Imrana Qadeer

Amidst celebrations of the 50th anniversary of India's independence, some are trying to use the occasion as a vantage point to look back and assess our achievements, progress and direction If one is looking at India's future then what could be better than the subject of child health Children are the future their health is the index of the health of people, and when

SALIENT FEATURES OF NEW TIME
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NEW TRAINS

With effect from August 1,1997 as per details given below :

1 **2916/2915** A daily train-Ashram Express between Delhi and Ahmedabad (on newly converted Broad Gauge)

Timings :

2916			2915	Days
17 15 D	↓	Ahmedabad	↑ A 08 10	Daily
10 15 A		Delhi	D 15 05	

2 **6343/6344** A Weekly train betewwn Ernakulam and Hazrat Nizamuddin

Timings :

6343			6344	Days
18 50 D	↓	Ernakulam	↑ A 09 00	Tue from Ernakulam
21 20 A		H Nizamuddin	D 05 50	Fri from Hazrat Nizamuddin

3 **5005/5006** A Bi Weekly Train between Gorakhpur and Dehradun

Timings :

5005			5006	Days
21 00 D	↓	Gorakhpur	↑ A 07 50	Mon & Wed from
03 00 A		Luknow Jn	D 02 30	Gorakhpur
03 10 D			A 02 20	Tue & Thu from
14 00 A		Dehradun	D 15 15	Dehradun

4 **4017/4018** A Weekly train–Sadbhavna Express between Delhi and Muzaffarpur

Timings :

4018			4017	Days
16.45 D	↓	Delhi	↑ A 04 55	Wed from Delhi
18 05 A		Muzaffarpur	D 03 30	Fri from Muzaffarpur

5 **6787/6788** Madurai-Erode Link Express for Jammu Tawi combining with 6317/6687 at Erode

Timings :

6787			6788	
A	D		A	D
—	22 00	Madurai	15 35	—
02 10	02 45	Erode	10 30	10 40

6 **9047/9048** A Weekly train between Surat and Patna on the path of 9045/9046 (old No 4245/4246) Surat - Varanasi Express

Timings

9047			9048
06 15 D	↓	Surat	↑ A 21 55
08 30 A		Mugalsarai	D 19 45
08 50 D			A 19 25
12 55 A		Patna	D 15 45

7 **3/4 HS** A New train between Hissar and Sadulpur

Timings :

4HS			3HS
14 30 D	↓	Sadulpur	↑ A 13 00
16 30 A		Hissar	D 11 00

8 **3/4 LF** A New DMU Train between Ludhiana and Firozpur

Timings :

4LF			3LF
08 50 D	↓	Firozpur	↑ A 14 35
11 30 A		Ludhiana	D 11 45

9 **595/596** A New Train between Sitapur and Gonda

Timings :

595			596
07 00 D	↓	Sitapur	↑ A 20 40
11 30 A		Gonda	D 14 45

10 **GNS-3/SNG-2** A New EMU Train between Ghaziabad and Shakurbasti via New Delhi

Timings :

GNS-3			SNG-2
09 45 D	↓	Ghaziabad	↑ A 16 30
10 20 A		New Delhi	D 15 50
10 30 D			A 15 48
11 00 A		Shakurbasti	D 15 25

11 **593/594** A New Passenger Train between Lucknow (NER) to Sitapur via Barabanki-Burhwal

Timings :

593			594
04 45 D	↓	Lucknow	↑ A 23 40
05 52 A		Barabanki	D 21 55
05 55 D			A 21 50
09 30 A		Sitapur Cantt	D 17 50

EXT

1	**4609/4610**	Jammu Tawi Ferozpur E Road and renumbered
2	**3307/3308**	Ganga Satluj Express E
3	**4047/4048**	Delhi-Gonda Express E:
4	**1031/1032**	Pune Madwadi Express
5	**4681/4682**	New Delhi-Ludhiana Ex
6	**1/2 HJ**	Hissar-Jakhal Passenge
7	**1/2 BBR**	Bikaner Ratanagarh Pa:
8	**233/234**	Churu-Sikar Passenger
9	**1/4 CM**	Chandausi-Moradabad 1/2 ACM (With extension of 1/4 withdrawn from Manjur Dharampur Halt, Dibai

INCREASE

S. No.	Train No.	Nar
1	**4245/4246**	Surat-Vara (New No 9
	Days :	From Surat- Wed , Thu From Varar Wed , Thur
2	**5217A/5218A**	Kurla Darb (New No 5 5217/521 (frequency days to five
	Days :	5219 from 5220 from

DIV

1 9165A/9166A Ahmedabad-Muza to run via Barabanki Jn -Shahganj J

2 4649/4650 Saryu Yamuna Expres Dârbhanga and 4649A/4650A D Lucknow, Shahganj Jn and Azam Delhi-Darbhanga on all the days as

CHANGE OF

Old Number	Train Name
4245/4246	Surat-Varanasi
4649A/4650A	Saryu Yamuna
5011A/5012A	Cochin-Barauni
5087A/5088A	Barauni Jammu
5217A/5218A	Kurla Darbhan
9165/9166	Ahmedabad Va
9165/9166	Ahmedabad Fa
9165A/9166A	Ahmedabad-Mu
4011A/4012A	Meerut-Saharar
4609/4610	Beas Link Expre
7611/7612	Amritsar-Nande
2479/2480	Goa Express
4667/4668	Malwa Express
4057/4058	Kashi Vishwana
4007A/4008A	Sadbhavana Ex
1AC/2AC	Agra Kanpur Pc

Agency AIRADS LTD

BLE OF NORTHERN RAILWAY

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ONS

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 Varanasi
l utpo Jalandhar City
ɔ Dhuri and renumbered as 1/2 DJH
led upto Churu and renumbered as 1/2 BC
 Jaipur
ended upto Aligarh and renumbered as

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ganj, Godha Halt, Atrauli Road,

EQUENCY

	Frequency	
	Old	New
	4 Days (a week)	5 Days (a week)
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	Weekly	Bi Weekly
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Tues & Thurs		
& Sun		

ONS

ently running 3 days a week will be diverted

running Twice a week between Delhi and arpur once a week is diverted to run via it touching Vanarasi and will run between)

N NUMBERS

	New Number
	9045/9046
	Nos Withdrawn
	5221/5222
	5097/5098
	5219/5220
ess	9167/9168
	9163/9164
ink	9165/9166
	4512/4511
	4805/4806
	2715/2716
	2779/2780
	9367/9368
	4257/4258
	4015/4016
	1TC/2TC

1CM/4CM	Chandausi-Moradabad Passenger	1ACM/2ACM
3CM	Chandausi-Moradabad Passenger	1CM
1037/1038	Mumbai CST-Firozpur	2137/2138
1033/1034	Mumbai-Lucknow	2133/2134

RE-SCHEDULING OF MAIL/EXP. TRAINS

S. No.	Train No.	Name	Station	Timings			
				Old		New	
1	4667 (New No 9367)	Malwa Express	New Delhi	A	12 30	A	7 50
				D	13 00	D	8 10
		-do-	Jammu Tawi	A	23 10	A	18 20
2	2462DN	Mandore Express	Delhi	A	5 35	A	6 15
3	4229	Lucknow Mail	Lucknow	D	22 00	D	22 00
			New Delhi	A	7.45	A	6 55
4	4057 (New No 4257)	Kashi Vishwanath Express	Varanasi	D	14 00	D	16 00
			New Delhi	A	6 40	A	7 45
5	4058 (New No 4258)	Kashi Vishwanath Express	New Delhi	D	13 30	D	12 30
		– do –	Varanasi	A	5.45	A	5 05
6	4055	Brahmaputra Mail	Delhi	A	5.55	A	5 30
7	4721	New Delhi-Sri Ganganagar Exp	New Delhi	D	13 40	D	13 00
		-do-	Sri Ganganagar	A	21 50	A	20 20
8,	5610	Avadh Express	Delhi	D	8 20	D	8 40
9	2006	Kalka New Delhi Shatabdi	New Delhi	A	9 50	A	10 00
10	4668 (New No 9368)	Malwa Express	Jammu Tawi	D	8 25	D	8 30
			New Delhi	A	18 30	A	18 55
11	7611 (New No 2715)	Amritsar-Nanded Express	Amritsar	D	5 30	D	5 55
			New Delhi	A	12 55	A	13 15
12	1038 (New No 2138)	Punjab Mail	Ferozpur	D	21 20	D	22 00
13	1037 (New No 2137)	Punjab Mail	Ferozpur	A	5 50	A	5 15
14.	4650/4674	Saryu Yamuna Shaheed Express	Delhi	D	21 00	D	21 20
15	3008DN	Udyan Abha Toofan Exp	Sri Ganganagar	D	19 20	D	21 10
16	3007 UP	-do-	-do-	A	7 55	A	7 35
17	9023 UP	Mumbi Central-Ferozpur Janta Express	Ferozpur	A	22 05	A	21 40
18	3152	Sealdah Express	Jammu Tawi	D	18 55	D	19 30
19	3074/5088/ 5098/5622	(Himgiri Group)	Jammu Tawi	D	21 30	D	22 10
20	4310	Ujjaini Express	Dehradun	D	5 00	D	5 45
21	4659	Amritsar Express	New Delhi	D	14 30	D	13 10
			Amritsar	A	22 00	A	20 45
22	4681	New Delhi-Jalandhar Exp	New Delhi	D	13 05	D	14 30
			Jalandhar		–	A	23 00
23	9019	Mumbai Dehradun Exp	Dehradun	A	16 25	A	16 45
24	9020	Dehradun-Mumbai Exp	Dehradun	D	11.45	D	11 25
25	4309	Ujjaini Express	Dehradun	A	19 00	A	18 30
26	4113	Link Express	Dehradun	A	13 05	A	12 00
27	4266	Dehradun-Varanasi Exp	Dehradun	D	18 20	D	18 35
			Varanasi	A	18 30	A	18 15
28	4888	Jodhpur Kalka Express	Jodhpur	D	10 30	D	11 30
			Kalka	A	8 00	A	6 55

Note : In addition some more trains have been extended/diverted or there is increase in their frequency/change in timings For more details please consult new Northern Railway Time Table effective from 1 8 97 available at Railway Booking Offices & book stalls

NORTHERN RAILWAY

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C/RAJNI/TABRAIL CD/97

SIZE 27X8

unhappy they reflect the social sickness of economically advanced societies and prospering classes

Independent India did make a confident beginning by enshrining the rights of child in the Constitution itself and by attempting to build its infrastructure to provide support services In this effort over the past 50 years, the demographic achievements cannot be ignored Infant mortality declined from 146 in the early 50s to 74 (in 1993), and child mortality for 0 to 4 years of age came down to 66 5 in rural areas and 33 7 in urban areas The National Family Health Survey of 1995 however, records a higher under-five mortality, at 109 The death rate for 5-9 year age group has come down to 2 8 per thousand children

These demographic improvements, however, tend to get diluted when we examine some other dimensions of children's health For example, the gender differential against female children has remained a primary concern The declining sex ratio and the menace of technologies such as amniocentesis and sonography are well-documented This selective destruction of the female foetus has spread to the small towns and is an additional threat to the declining sex ratio Even for the age group 5-9, sex differential remains tilted aginst the female child in the rural areas The use of technological progress against the female child acquired new dimensions when, despite the reports of medical misuse of amniocentesis and thousands of reported abortions of female foetuses, the Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Regulation and Prevention of MIsuse) Bill 1991 was so weak that it failed to provide protection against the ravage of the technologies that replaced amniocentesis

The gender differential is not the only disturbing aspect of the apparent achievements A more important reflection of the inequality within demographic achievements was the obvious differentials across socio-economic classes Though the sharp class divisions are visible, when it comes to national monitoring of the directions of development, we have little reliable data to assess poverty Hence the definitions and quantum of poverty remain a flourishing debate Even if we take the Planning Commission's current expert group estimates, the population below the poverty line in rural areas is 33 percent and in urban areas 20 percent It needs no discussion to realise that the near 100 million children within this group are living under dire poverty and an almost equal number, who may be labelled as above the poverty line, are only marginally better The Registrar General produced a survey report on infant and child mortality that showed the disparity in rural areas where households that were assessed to be poor, because they used oil lamp, had an IMR of 157 while the better-off who used electricity, recorded an IMR of 90, in the year 1979 Using a clearer definition of poverty, the same source reported in 1984 similar differentials, across economic classes In rural areas infant mortality was 128 6 in households earning Rs 5,000 annually, 108 for those earning Rs 5001 to Rs 10,000 and 91 8 for households earning 10,001 and above In urban areas the rates across these classes were 85 4, 71 5 and 51 5 respectively This class differential persists among older children as well, the corresponding death rates being 52 4, 41 8 and 34 0 per thousand children in 0 to 4 year group, and 5 1, 3 8 and 2 9 per thousand among 5-14 year children in rural areas These age specific death rates in urban areas were relatively lower though the class differentials were nearly the same In comparison, in the richest class, the 0-4 year group had an age-specific mortality of 33 2, 24 4 and 16 6 while for the 5-14 year group, the class differentials were 3 9, 2 4 and 2 3

Demographic inequalities are further intensified when we take into account regional variations At one end of the demographic scale are States like like Kerala, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Punjab while at the other end we have Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan—infant mortality ranges from 110 to 13 These regional differences are essentially a result of intensification of class and gender correlates of mortality and poor services in some States These are equally reflected in the differentials of maternal mortality across States The latter ranges from an estimated 5 in Kerala and 12 in Himachal Pradesh to 62 and 59 in Bihar and Rajasthan The implications of high maternal mortality for children's health are self-evident

The pattern of illness and disease that afflict children, shows that communicable diseases continue to be the major health hazard Within this group, diarrhoeal diseases and pneumonias, along with malnutrition, still remain the major killer of children While small pox was eradicated, so-called preventable diseases such as tuberculosis, malaria, hepatitis, gastroenteritis (including cholera), tetanus, etc , continue to be serious threats to children, and a range of new viral dieases such as AIDS and encephalitis is added to them.

A major contributing factor for this unrelenting pattern of diseases of children and the demographic lag that India is trapped in, is the nutritional status of children. In 1986, C. Gopalan pointed out that there was little difference between the nutritional status of children over the years 1956-57 and 1980 for which he compared two sets of data. In fact he argued that if anything, the condition of the children of urban slums had actually worsened. The problem of data availability continues to haunt those who wish to analyse time trends further and assess the class diffrentials over time. The National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau provides some valuable insights into this problem. Its analysis of the weight for age for eight major States (which excludes the worst off states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan) reveals that the significant declines in moderate to severe malnutrition achieved over the 70s and 80s have entered a phase of stagnation. While earlier 77.5 percent of the 1-5 year children had moderate to severe malnutrition, by the end of the 80s, the level came down to 52.5 percent. Over the 90s, however, this proportion has lingered on around much the same level. These degrees of severe and moderate malnutrition are no doubt concentrated among the poorest sections while the rest of the mild cases of malnutrition get distributed into other households as well.

This rather dissatisfying improvement in demographic and vital statistics makes it difficult to keep up one's enthusiasm for celebrating our hard-earned freedom. A whole department of Family Welfare, one for Social Welfare, a National Children's Board, a National Policy for Children (1974), an annual Children's Day, and an array of Central and State level insititutions, focusing concertedly on the child, have failed to adequately reach out to that vast and vulnerable section of children whose photographs are the favourite of our mass media whenever it wants to project the idea that hope, trust and the promise of a future never dies, despite the odds! What has gone wrong despite all the concern and investment? Can anything be done about it?

At the analytical level two dimensions need to be explored. What was the nature of interventions that were made to improve child health and how did they fit into our larger strategy of development?

The first generation of intervention programmes for health were the Maternal and Child Health (MCH), vitamin A, B-Complex and Iron supplementation, feeding programmes and vertical programmes meant for control and eradication of communicable diseases. By 1980 it also included the Expanded Programme on Immunisation. Among the second generation of programmes were Integrated Family Planning, Maternal and Child Health and national programmes under the fifth five year plan, out of which emerged the Integrated Child Development Services since the mid-70s. Though the word 'integration' became the most saleable concept in health planning, and the failure of vertical strategies led to the evolution of the concept of Primary Health Care within which integrated basic health care was a core component, the ground reality hardly changed. Re-emerging as the concept of 'Selective Primary Health Care' programmes, such as Universal Immunisation Programme, Child Survival, and Reproductive Health, marginalised comprehensive Primary Health Care which had in fact heralded a paradigm shift in the prevailing approach to health.

Primary Health Care is not a concept that is restricted to levels of health care. It is a qualitative alternative wherein *health and disease are perceived to be rooted in the social, economic and political reality of a people*. Thus health is seen as a product of not only acceptable, affordable and appropriate technology but also of intersectoral development (WHO, Alma Ata, 1978). Therefore, public distribution systems to ensure food availability and drinking water, transportation and other basic facilities are seen as necessary conditions for health along with a need-based basic health care system which gets the full support of the secondary and tertiary levels of health care. Of all sections of the population this concept was most critical for chidren, children who are dependent on parents, families and communities and hence cannot be healthy if the family is sick and poor and the community is not capable of supporting them.

This very basic pre-requisite for the wellbeing of children was lost upon the nation's planners who evolved fragmented vertical strategies to deal with problems of child health. These ultimately ended up benefiting more the merchants of technology - not necessarily suited to the needs of the majority, as well as of a select section which not only had the privilege of free access to basic services but could also afford to pay for the use of expensive medical treatment, imported to help India retain its 'international standards'? The current shifts in the economy have only worsened the condition of the poor. The 80s offered a tough challenge as the country found itself in the trap of rising debt and falling real incomes. Those at the helm of affairs looked at the two historical experiments available to mankind and used the collapse of the socialist bloc to give up even the pretence of any 'socialistic' endeavour by the State. Since nothing succeeds like apparent success, the free market model of the West was chosen as India's panacea. Neither the strengths of socialist experiments in building their social infrastructure nor the failures of the capitalist system, specially the US in dealing with its poor, were taken into account. Even the consistent efforts of these developed countries to evolve methods of state control over social support services were totally ignored.

Thus when the flow of money from the rich to the poor nations (as 'assistance') reversed itself, the southern world began transferring at least $ 20 billion a year to the northern hemisphere. The poor nations are told to re-adjust at the cost of the safety net they had painstakingly evolved over the years without giving it this fancy name. The officials--both international and national--insist that adjustment policy has its own safety net that gives it a human face. To keep up the pretence of a safety net the national governments demand aid and the international pressure intensifies for directed development (e.g., International Conference on Population and Development, Revised Draft Programme of Action, 1994). Yet, the human face ramains elusive. If at all, it is reflected in the cut-backs on health and other social sector programmes, in the falling per capita incomes, in the 500,000 children who walk alone on the roads of India's seven big cities or in the 13 million children under 14 year of age who, on government's admission, join the labour force to eke out a living.

The Operation Research Group in fact estimated 44 million child labourers, as of 1983. These children work in home-based or small scale industries, in agriculture, quarries, mines, as home help and as object of pleasure for sick minds. Can they be ever saved from an unhealthy life without the support of their families and their communities? This is possible only when the communities have access to basic amenities, such as food supplies, a place to build a home, health and educational facilities and employment opportunities, which the elite take for granted. Without the minimum essential control over these resources the most well-intentioned communities will be rendered helpless.

The question is not just of developing alternatives and working out details as any number of such exercises have been done even by the government and the results are there yet to be implemented. For example, in 1980 the Planning Commission itself set up a working group that for the first time came out clearly with the proposal to invest it intersectoral planning for improving living conditions of communities and lowering infant and child mortality to generate demands for family planning services. A more current example is a document titled Covergent Community Action, a Strategy, by the Goverment of India that implies three primary conditions for development: economic security of households, support for basic health and education and organisation of communities where the voice of women and the rights of children have space (Department of Rural Development, 1997).

The real challenge is to tackle the attitude, mixed with fear, that lurks in the minds of those who think they have made it and therefore need not worry about the rest. This dissociation between the haves and the have-nots belies all alternative planning from above. Those who matter today have a schizophrenic existence. While on one hand they proclaim their commitment to equity, human rights and participatory democracy, on the other they do not wish to risk any of their acquired comforts, to invest in others or to feel responsible for the collective and not just token bits and pieces. Thus the parliamentarians not happy with the annual renovation of their accommodation and the heavily subsidised Central Government Health Services want a raise in their salaries. The bureaucrats are busy pressing for the supremacy of their cadre and enhanced perks, the politicians are drawing from the state treasuries through ingenious swindles and in clearing up their medical bills chalked up in far away lands, and the health professionals are busy queuing up before corporate hospitals after fleeing from the public hospitals. The district and state level personnel are busy dipping into the grain supplies for the ICDS, and each one argues that no individual is responsible, it is the system, and until the system is changed, no corrective can work.

The dream of a better India, less inequitable, more democratic and more caring of its children is thus converted into empty slogans of equity, rights and development. Instead of unshackling human beings, change is at best perceived as expansion of glamourous and busy markets where the expanding middle class can spend and acquire more Within this mind-set, there is a search for rationalising their fear and dislike of the poor The burgeoning, upwardly mobile, increasingly amoral middle class of today seldom pause to remember that they themselves were 'poor' not long ago They are no model for the kind of future foreseen by those who staked their all in our freedom struggle

The privileged rarely doubt their conclusions so they never accept their part in the making of the other half The sensitive ones when over-stretched get into the charity mould They hardly ever attempt to understand the survival strategies and the collective efforts and the sharing culture of the poor and their children Their picture of poverty is of bleakness, tears, hunger and violence exclusively, so laughter, smile, generosity and humaneness, abundant among the marginalised, upsets their mental models It further reinforces their hardened image of the poor who are seen to be so callous that they can laugh even in their current plight! Only when the better-off tackle these prejudices, see the poorer half as human, worth relating to (even if at the abstract level), and worth risking for, will social change be possible without social conflict Till that happens the young, innocent and vulnerable children will continue to be the victims of the tyranny of the system and maybe they will grow up to be angry young people who have no use of it--unless its perpetuators begin to look beyond their closed windows

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Early Childhood

The years of freedom

S Anandalakshmy

It is said of human beings that they tend to glorify the past Whether it is trying to remember one's own childhood and the history of early experiences, or the country's past, a selective amnesia operates by which we are able to forget some unpleasant events and remember those which make us feel good However, I am not sure that when our present becomes the past and a hundred years later, our history is written, our age can ever be a "glorious past"! Honest historians will be constrained to describe the half century after Independence as the age of Absurdity! We are a people who value bricks and stone, cement and mortar, roads and dams, cars and planes, much more highly than we value human beings The State has rules to insist that a car is insured at birth, that the health of the machine is properly maintained and that any damage to its body be repaired forthwith! Not so with humans Every child born has no assurance of being looked after, treated for illness or educated for a livelihood When a child arrives it is not counted as a blessing, a promise being fulfilled, but as part of the "population problem," adding yet more strain on the nation's slender, finite resources This warped perspective is widely shared by those who frame public policy and by those who influence it So, where does that leave the young child? In the hands of the mother, the siblings and with luck, the extended family Good hands to be in, but for the harsh reality of poverty, since the mother and others are too busy eking out a living, to pay much attention to the child Physical proximity and demand feeding at the breast are still part of a continuing tradition for most families in India Combining work outside the home, with caring for the infant produces many conflicts for the mother, but convenient and trustworthy creches are simply not available for the vast majority

The ICDS (Integrated Child Development Services) was intended to be a response to the need of poor families, not having access to suitable alternative caregivers The community was expected to provide the building, or part of a building, so that infants under three years of age could feed, sleep and play and children from 3 to 6 years could be involved in education Not formal education with literacy and numeracy, but play and playful, joyful experiences of the sensory kind, which lead to the understanding of the world around and the world within In the ICDS jargon this was called non-formal preschool education A tautology, I once pointed out, but the terminology was defended on the basis that this would still differentiate it from formal classes Countrywide observations show that infants are not trusted with the ICDS staff and there are no proper arrangements to take care of the children under three Even for the other group, from 3 to 6 years of age at best, some custodial care is provided. As in every generalisation, there are exceptions in *anganwadis*, that do function as play centres. But the gap between the original vision and field reality gets wider each day.

For the affluent, there are many options, including good ones, for child care at home or in a preschool setting. The unwise options are more: child care and education in nursery schools that are miniature high schools, ditto everything to the last shoelace, or "cute" play centres where imitating the West mindlessly is built into the school constitution and children are fined if they are heard speaking to one another in any Indian language! The children from these preschools swim the English Channel everyday! Their early lessons which said "The cat sat on the mat" and "The lion says gre-grr" acquire a new meaning, as they realise that the operative words are SAT and GRE. In crossing the oceans, their faces may turn green, but it is only when their passports turn green that they feel they have reached the goal of a long and arduous journey! Unfortunately, but predictably, the middle class families and institutions assume that the road to success is paved with the memories of black sheep who conceal nothing more than three bags of wool, children who fall off hills and blind rodents that chase married women! The farther these are from the everyday experiences of children, the better they are presumed to be bolstering their prospects. Other rituals for success and prosperity in the future include dress regulations for schooling. They vary in many ways, but what they have in common is their unsuitability for tropical weather and slushy roads.

Where have all the children gone? How come so few of them enjoy the miracle years of childhood, from 3 to 6 years? Because, in the Age of Absurdity, parents, value the future over the present. Their focus shifts to what the child will become and the present continuous is fully excluded. Whether we value the past or decry it, it has an existence in our consciousness. We, the people, are hurtling to the future, quite unmindful of this moment, the present. At the same time, children have a great ability to be present, to savour an experience when it is happening, to relish a sensation, whether it is useful or not for later learning. But there are parents and teachers, probably uncles and aunts too, who will be eager-beaverly converting the experience for the improvement of the child's mind. In any case, all experience is naturally absorbed and transformed into knowledge, by the child, but not with the killjoy efficiency of adult caregivers.

The freedom to be oneself, to be valued for just being that person rather than for any specific measurable achievement is of the essence for the child. It is a necessary antecedent for self-esteem, which in turn, helps the child in the trials of growing up and the tribulations of staying grown up.

What in the issue here? That children do not seem to merit the kind of investment that other aspects of national development claim as a matter of right, that the child is perceived as an unfinished adult, not as a person in his own right. In this, the government of India is one of the worst defaulters. The budget allocations of Social Welfare (under whose aegis institutions for early childhood operate), Education and Health, which were low to start with have become even lower in this past decade. The ministers heading these are commiserated by their peers and the general expectation is that with good behaviour, they will soon be out of India's Siberian posting.

Any discussion of even early childhood must refer to gender, in the current context of India. Gender differences in the opportunity structure are so pervasive that childhood becomes a dichotomy, splitting into girlhood and boyhood. It begins with the right to be born. A girl child is often snuffed out at birth, presumably without anyone's awareness that a murder is being committed. If the girl child survives these onslaughts, she still has to face discrimination at every turn, in food, health facilities and access to education, in the rights within the family. In the past decade, there has been much concern and a number of publications have come out on this issue and the consequent social action as a response. In the process, the girl child is treated as a totally separate category of human being. This masks the fact that equality of opportunity was the original expectation. In the concern for the inequities of the girl child's condition, we may tend to side stream the gender question.

The State does not assume responsibility for all children born, the children of the very poor can be described as the orphans of the State, though voluntary organizations do sometimes adopt them or provide for certain aspects of their development. However, infant care facilities for mothers who are formally employed or working in the informal sector are scarce, dismally so Despite petitions, appeals and examples, from individuals and organised groups, including the Forum for Child Care Services (FORCES) policy formulation is very slow The campaign for child care as a basic service continues and, it is hoped, will gain momentum in the fiftieth year of our Independence

The official spokesman may say that the ICDS takes care of the babies since it is a child care service for children from birth to six years (referred to as "zero to six" in the document) But there is a serious problem because the workers in the scheme are considered "voluntary, temporary and part-time" At the same time, they have numerous tasks that detract from child care proper, time-fillers, in a sense The child care worker does not get even a minimum wage of an unskilled worker under the law, which is why she is happily labelled "a volunteer from the community" The truth is painful, so why not some comic relief?

There are many inspiring, innovative and imaginative projects and programmes for the child, arising out of voluntary effort Any description of them will take a whole volume Naming or identifying a few will mean leaving out some, which one might do as much from lack of information about efforts around the country, as from an attempt to list the most important ones There is an energy and enthusiasm in voluntary effort, a commitment and dedication that cannot be matched in governmental schemes, the latter suffer from a lack of identity and ownership and the massive machinery behind the movement to scale, makes workers feel impersonal The national policy on child care should be to let a thousand flowers bloom and not to insist on monoculture of schemes There is a tendency towards an emphasis on uniformity as though it is merely a question of neat packaging We should resist that and keep our multicultural, diverse, dynamic and sometimes chaotic styles and patterns of working, keeping in mind that the focus is on childhood *today* Not because one day these children will be productive adults and add to the economic wealth of India, but because they are children who deserve to be happy, healthy, educated and be given a choice in what they want to do and how they would like to grow up When they are emotionally supported and provided the opportunities for cognitive competence they will very definitely be a strength to the family, community and to society Also, it is not necessary to think of children as human resources, resource for something or someone, but as human beings, perons, who being cherished, will have the freedom inside themselves to become inventors, poets, actors, singers, scientists, teachers, doctors, artists, deep sea divers, photographers and so on One hopes that the second half century after Independence will find us building upon our experience and giving children the genuine freedom of their freedom years

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Primary Education

Letting in the light

Krishna Kumar

Statistics mean precious little so far as the spread of education in India among primary school age children is concerned 'Selected Educational Statistics' annually published by the central government's department of education have been showing hundred per cent enrolment for boys and about ninety per cent enrolment for girls for quite a few years now In this officially drawn picture, therefore, Kerala has no distinction No one, of course, believes these statistics to be true—not even the government Attempts to survey the spread of primary education in a somewhat rigorous manner have indicated that between forty to fifty per cent of our primary school age children are not in school More certain evidence exists to show that only a third of all the children who enrol in grade one reach grade eight How many are declared 'fail' at this point is again a matter of conjecture How severe the weeding at this point and beyond might be, especially for those with the least stamina to survive in the system, can be estimated from a studied guess recently made that just one out of every hundred girls enrolled in grade one reaches grade twelve in rural India

There is a simple reason why our statistics are so unreliable The teacher, the main agent available to the state for collecting enrolment figures, has no power to record the reality Over the decades, higher officials and ministers have trained the primary school teacher in dishonest record keeping It is on account of this training that we have grossly inaccurate knowledge of plain facts like how many children enrol, how many attend, and how many qualify for promotion to the next grade The game of numbers goes on though everyone can see through it The information that an honest teaching force would have provided as a matter of routine each year now requires massively funded research projects to assemble Not just enrolment and attendance, even achievement levels of children now need to be assessed by research organizations who seek international funding to do this job This absurd situation is a direct consequence of not letting the teacher function with autonomy and dignity

There has been other consequences of this denial I recall a workshop held several years ago to devise ways to inculcate a sense of autonomy and initiative among children All day long the participants debated, weighing cultural factors against economic factors, comparing Indian classrooms with classrooms in Japan and Europe, citing studies that showed teacher-centredness and compliance under all circumstances as prominent themes of socialisation in our system How all this could be changed, we wondered, for change it must, we all agreed, given the fact that democracy thrives only when people can think on their own and assert themselves We all recorded our dismay over the textbook system, the examination system, gender discrimination, and so on, but the key issue of inculcating the spirit of freedom and autonomy among children continued to elude us It was towards the closure of the day's discussion, I recall, that I encountered and recognized a simple truth when Susmita Bannerjee asked, 'How can a teacher who has never enjoyed freedom in his professional life impart it to children?'

I doubt if this point has occurred to any Secretary or a Director of Public Instruction (in some state capitals they have started calling him Commissioner, as a sign of departure from colonial practice), or for that matter, someone in the Ministry of Human Resource Development in the centre

Otherwise we would have heard about a study team being set up somewhere to look into existing practices—some of them are well over a hundred years old—by means of which the bureaucracy denies freedom and dignity to the primary school teacher Members of such a team would only have to sit down among primary school teachers in different parts of the country to hear stories illustrating the limited, obsequious and trivilialised lives that teachers lead These stories would need to be supplemented by visits to classrooms if the study team wanted to know why teacher-child interaction in our system of education is usually so erratic and meagre My feeling is that ultimately the team would have to recommend major alterations in the rule-book that governs power-relationships between the teacher and the bureaucracy If Susmita's logic is correct, a powerless and often demeaned teacher cannot enable the state to fulfil Article 39(f) of the Constitution which directs the state to provide facilities and opportunities whereby children might develop '*in conditions of freedom and dignity*' The state has escaped the charge of violating Article 45 by routinely deferring the deadline for achievement of universal elementary education, but Article 39(f) it has surely violated all along

The stereotype of an Indian primary school as a crowded, dingy place needs no modification 'Operation Blackboard' proved a failure, and it is a little too early to say how the current, expenditure-driven, externally funded District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) will fare in construction and maintenance of school buildings Yet, despite the depressing physical space the school provides and a demoralised teacher force, the demand for education has grown It makes no sense anymore to explain the high 'drop-out' rate among children of downtrodden sections of society by saying that their parents do not value education Studies made two or three decades ago customarily advanced this explanation, and some still do, thereby diverting attention from structural factors There are two sets of factors one related to the school's routine, ethos and bias, the other set has to do with socio-economic conditions

Over the years I have noticed no significant change in the first set of factors The school calendar remains just as inconsistent with the rhythm of rural life as it was The bias pervading the curriculum and the teacher's attitudes has also remained intact The body of knowledge and texts to which the school exposes children promote an urban, middle-class way of life Life of the poor, especially those who reside in villages, is either ignored altogether or ridiculed There is also prejudice against girls and women, these days it is expressed subtly as overt bias gets screened Also, a tendency has developed among bias-conscious text writers to choose trivial themes in which boys and girls can be shown as equal participants In all cases where the new text materials make a special attempt to include a few symbols of village life, the dalits and womanhood, they inevitably follow cardboard prescriptions handed out by the bureaucracy For the village girl or boy, school books have no reflection of a living, dynamic reality to which one might relate with a sense of identification

But apart from its biased character, school knowledge suffers from another crippling feature—crippling in the sense that it makes the school as such an unexciting experience for all children I am referring to the absence of any hands-on experience, any vital contact with nature, any music and any colour in the curriculum of our primary schools I believe if our planners could provide every seven-year old the opportunity to hold and blow into a penny-whistle type flute made of plastic, metal or bamboo, the child's chances of staying at school would greatly increase Provision of paper and paints would make a similar difference It is a terrible irony that a country that subsidises stupendous amounts of paper on posters and small-town newspapers cannot find paper on which its children can splash elementary colours Absence of nature study is another such irony Nurturing plants, observing the stars and clouds, noticing the lives of animals and birds—none of this requires major expenditure, but the prescribed curriculum offers no leisure for activities of this kind nor are teachers trained to take them seriously Finally, there is the story of hands-on experience which was once given a central place in primary education under Gandhi's influence Since the mid-sixties when the Kothari Commission decided to devalue 'basic' education, we have not taken a second look at it I am not aware of any alternative scheme which, if implemented with some degree of commitment, promises to make so radical a difference as Gandhi's scheme does

The second set of structural reasons responsible for the forcing of children out of school has to do with socio-economic conditions and policies which perpetuate poverty It is quite clear now that the Green Revolution strategy increased food production, but it also deepened social disparity and exacerbated mass poverty Construction of huge dams, mining and industrial activities in rural hinterlands have had a similar effect, in addition to causing large-scale uprootment and misery The manner in which a lot of development work has been undertaken leaves no doubt that poverty has not been in the forefront of the state's concerns Children's wellbeing in the context of induced impoverishment and turmoil has been even farther from the forefront Consequently, children's involvement in all kinds of labour, including hazardous labour, has increased Hunger and malnutrition are not easy to ascertain with the help of surveys They tend to form a chronic cycle in which disease and routine illness emerge as a cover Children who get trapped in this cycle stop coming to school, and it looks so 'natural' when they do, that no one feels bothered Once they stop attending school, they just hang around and slip into some little responsibility or the other which their parents give them This is hardly a decision on the part of parents as many surveyors seem to think

Since the 1990 Jomtien world conference there has been a flurry of activity in Indian primary education It strains credulity to believe that Jomtien jolted the rich nations and global bodies into an awareness of the situation which they had lacked earlier More plausible is the theory that Jomtien was timed to make neo-liberal marketism of the North look decent and acceptable to the South In India, post-Jomtien gifts and soft loans coincided with structural adjustment policies and ideology Six years since these policies were pressed into practice there is no evidence to say that real incomes of the poor are rising The contrary evidence is plenty The export-driven economy has accelerated an inflationary cycle Greater freedom than existed before to exploit natural resources for generation of marketable wealth has speeded up environmental degradation and decline in its capacity to sustain a substantial section of the rural poor Many other countries of the Third World have witnessed these consequences The new social ecology has hardly any good to offer to children Break-up of communities, growth of slums, destitution, child labour and prostitution, truancy and crime these are all different expressions of the new social ecology

We could add a few more by looking at the rich, urban child whose isolation from the wider society in which he or she must live brings about its own pathologies I do not know how these horrible wrongs committed on children can be corrected by changes in education alone I am also not very clear how we got here in just fifty years after fighting a positively original and wide-ranging battle concurrently against foreign rule and social evils Of course it is some news that the government is planning to amend the constitution to make elementary education a fundamental right in this golden jubilee year of freedom, unmindful of the Supreme Court decision to the same effect So far, making elementary education universal was a directive principle of state policy The state which ignored its own principle for fifty years must allow us some time to nurture faith in its latest move to endow children with the right to education

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Childhood denied, under the law

Vasudha Dhagamwar

Girls and the right to childhood

The years 1991-2000 are designated as the decade of the girl child jointly by the seven SAARC countries These countries have defined a girl as a female between 0-20 years of age

However extension of childhood upto the age of 20 years has no foundation in law or medical science Medical science regards only a person under twelve years of age as a child In exceptional circumstances, the age limit may be stretched upto fourteen The next stage, of adolescence, lasts upto eighteen, and thereafter medical science classifies individuals, male and female, as adults

Even the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child sets the upper age limit for the child at 18 years The traditional perceptions—both at law and in medical science—of who is a child may be dismissed as outdated and the SAARC definition may appear to be more liberal, more favourable to the girl child In fact it is quite the reverse

Can we put a two year baby and her twenty year old mother in the same category of child? For health care, medical assistance, nutrition? Whose need is greater?

Is a nineteen year old bride in the same position as a bride of four, six, ten or fourteen or even sixteen years of age?

Law in general and certainly criminal law, family law and labour law regards a twenty year old as an adult The ages at which a person may undertake various activities vary from twelve to sixteen, at most eighteen (for marriage and in India, for voting) but never to twenty If we change this position a great many questions will arise Let us take a few

Under the Indian Penal Code a child under the age of seven is not held to be criminally liable If it is over seven and under twelve, the prosecution will have to prove that the child understood what it was doing Do we still maintain that the child under seven or even under twelve years is in the same category as a person of twenty?

At law a child cannot give its consent to acts harmful to itself Should this protection be withdrawn? Or do we say that an eighteen year old girl is too young to give her consent to an operation though her twin brother is not?

In case an eighteen year old commits female infanticide or aborts a female foetus, are we to say that a child has killed a child? Do we wish to raise the age of marriage to twenty for girls? Can we implement this law? If a nineteen year old wants divorce is her status that of a child? If she claims custody of her child is that petition to be rejected because she is a child herself? Is an eight year old labourer in the same boat as an eighteen year old worker?

In India the voting age has been lowered to eighteen from the 1991 general election Does it mean that the eighteen year old girls who voted were child voters? The question would not be asked of boys of eighteen as the SAARC countries are only concerned with the girl child!

The mental and physical changes that take place in human beings in the first decades of their lives are so remarkable that no one year is like the next To put those who count their ages in single digit, in the same category as persons at least twice (if not four, five, ten or twenty times) their age is to reduce the whole exercise to meaninglessness There is very real danger that so wide an age range will dilute, diffuse and distract our attention from the problems of the youngest, most vulnerable and most inarticulate children

This definition would also divide girls from boys at their very birth and remove the very foundation of equality between the sexes It is this equality that has been used to advocate equality of opportunity for girls If the girl child merits greater attention it is not because she is the same as a twenty year old, or because she is a "little woman" It is because she is not treated on par with the boy child This is not to deny that millions of boys in India and the other SAARC countries are also denied their childhood Thus with the girl child we *need to emphasise not only her sex, but also her extreme youth, innocence and vulnerability* This paper therefore focuses on the girl child upto the age of fourteen

What are the rights of a girl child as a girl?

Her first right is the right to be born and not to be aborted purely becauase she is a girl So far there are no fail-safe ways of preventing misuse of amneocentesis

Her second right is the right to remain alive after birth and not be killed quickly in her first few hours, or killed slowly by neglect or indifference, again only because she is a girl Female infanticide still continues, as the falling proportion of girls to boys, recorded by the census of India, indicates

Her third right is the right ot live This right, as guaranteed by Article 21 of our Consitution to all citizens, has been interpreted by the Supreme Court as the right to live with dignity Properly interpreted it would encompass the right to the body, right to the mind, right to childhood and the right to a family and a home The right in fact to grow up normally, naturally, freely

Freed from rhetoric, these rights can be understood thus

Right to one's body encompasses (1) the right to nutrition and clean water Also a right to health services, and to child care - to proper child care that is Being left to the tender mercies of a slightly older child does not constitute proper child care We in India have no laws that guarantee any of these

The right to body includes protection from criminal assault, including rape, prostitution, violence, forced beggary, all of them are inflicted both within and outside the family These areas come under criminal law There is no law against incest If it is not covered by rape (that is if the girl is over sixteen and can be said to have given her consent) then there is no offence

For violence against children greater punishment is not specified

There are provisions in the Indian Penal Code against enforced beggary, but they are not implemented The large number of children begging on the road side testifies to this fact

Rape and prostitution of girls under respectively 16 and 18 years of age is punishable The defence may not plead that the girl and consented or was exercising free choice But these laws, especially of rape, go unimplemented for various sociological reasons

While there is some enforcement of the law if offences are committed by outsiders, there is hardly any machinery for protecting the child from offences committed against her or him by family members, whether it is incest, prostitution, enforced beggary or violence

Enforcement of these laws would require a very effective and efficient system for providing economic relief, support services and social education or conscientisation This does not exist

The right to the body would include protection from marriage at a tender age At the moment this age is fixed at eighteen for Indian girls (21 for boys) The large number of marriages preformed in rural India between child brides and child bridegrooms is too well known to need any comment Under the Child Marriage Restraint Act 1929, the guardians of the children given in marriage are liable to punishment, yet the marriage is legally valid It is a civil Act It applies to all children regardless of their religion The Hindu Marriage Act and Muslim Personal Law allow the girl to repudiate her marriage at puberty. A Hindu girl may do so even if her marriage has been consummated But in her social circumstances even if a girl knew the law she is most unlikely to exercise this right, and therfore the marriage continues to grip her in its stranglehold Unless child marriages are declared illegal, just as polygamous marriages are illegal for non-Muslims, child marriage will continue to destroy the lives of our girls The only hope for the children—Hindu, Muslim, tribal or any other—is in changing the Child Marriage Act to make child marriage null and void

The right to the mind is the right to education This right is not guaranteed in India There is no compulsory universal education for children It is free, in goverment schools, but there is no compulsion on parents to send their children to school Statistics go to show that parents send far fewer girls to school than boys

The right also implies right to information, whether about law, health care, or opportunities

This right implies a right to a career At the moment in the traditional occupations women are only playing second fiddle A girl is never a carpenter or a smith in her own right The right to the mind is not recognised by our laws There is some lip service paid to the right to education but no efforts have been made to implement it

The right to childhood means the right to be freed from working at a tender age This right requires tougher, more comprehensive, more effective, better thought out legislation against child labour

At the moment there is no ban on domestic service or work in hotels

There is no ban on daylong household work within family and responsibility for younger siblings

There is no ban on agricultural labour

There is no ban on child labour in industries except a few hazardous occupations

In short, there is no ban on child labour within or without the family, even upto the age of fourteen

The girl child is even more seriously affected by the absence of these laws The burden of household work and child care falls exclusively on her, not on her brother she works at fetching fuel, fodder, water, watches the pot on the fire, looks after her younger brothers and sisters All this means that she has hardly any time to play, or be a child

The girl child requires freedom from domestic drudgery, freedom from the tyranny of her family She requires both mental and physical space to grow

There are no laws that guarantee her this freedom Such a law would require (i) a massive exercise in educating parents to rethink their attitude to girls and (ii) a complete restructuring of our social support services and financial priorities We have not even started thinking about any of these needs Indeed household work is dismissed as very light and normal

The Right to family and home would mean the right to a roof over one's head While all children are entitled to this right, a girl child on the roadside is far more vulnerable to sexual assaults This right would mean the right to be brought up by one's parents, though of course not to be tyrannised by anyone If a child has no parents, it has a right to be adopted and given a family, or to be looked after by the State *Neither of these rights is guaranteed in India Indeed even the U N Constitution on the Rights of the Child speaks of the right to housing and right to adoption in very guarded terms* The right to adoption is subject to religious beliefs, the right to housing is subject to economic constrants

Thus on the legal front there are the following problems which the child faces -

- There are no laws that protect the child (of either sex),
- There are no laws that discriminate in her or his favour to give added protection,
- There are laws but they are not implemented ,
- The economic and social support system that is absolutely essential for securing implementation of laws is not built up,
- The new social and familial attitudes that are essential are not created

Sometimes all these factors are together in one situation as when the child especially girl child is denied the right to education

We have to look for ways to overcome these shortcomings and guarantee the child all these rights

Right to be born Stricter supervision of clinics that test the amneobiotic fluid to prevent gender-based tests It will also be necessary to educate society to treat girls and boys equally

Right to remain alive This would require registration of birth and speedy investigation of the causes leading to a girl child's death As is done in dowry deaths, a girl child's death should by definition be treated as suspicious A postmortem should be required

All this will require extended medical services for all children Laws must be enacted to ensure provision of creches and balwadis in the countryside where women work on the land Medical services and social support services must be expanded

As with the right to be born, the right to remain alive can only be enforced if parents, family and society at large are helped to learn to value daughters

Right to live with dignity For criminal offences against children stiffer sentences must be laid down Education must be made free, compulsory and universal This may require a stick and a carrot policy Incentives will have to be combined with penalties to persuade parents to send children especially daughters to school If this is done the drudgery of the child within and outside the family will automatically decrease Provision of creches and balwadis will also free older girls from child care

Child marriage must be declared illegal If the right to repudiate marriage on growing up is also given to boys, they are more likely to exercise it If parents can no longer be sure of permanently disposing off the girl at a young age, they will not be so quick to get her married

All this required pressure on the government to *reallocate* resources for social support A law is only as good as the social and administrative infrastructure that supports it The courts cannot enforce such laws that require large expenditure or construction of, say, schools, health centres or training of child care workers, health workers, nurses, doctors or teachers The pressure has to be brought upon the executive and the legislature and also on the planning process

Finally, none of this will work unless continuous efforts are made to re-educate the people who control the lives of children, in whichever capacity as—parents, community workers, professionals in or outside government and elected representatives across the three layers of governance

India cannot afford Child Labour

In 1986 the Parliament repealed the Child Labour Regulation Act of 1934 and introduced another Act by the same name, the Child Labour Regulation and Abolition Act 1986 The bill that was proposed had been initiated by an organisation that worked with working children

They said that these children had no protection from exploitation, and law should provide it The second argument was that if the childrem did not work they would starve and even their families would starve In other words, India could not afford to abolish child labour, because poor children and poor parents needed the child's income

Manufacturers and businessmen do not employ children out of charity They do it because it is economically beneficial But the argument that is put forward is that the poor would suffer if their children did not work This debate has continued for long

Let us look at the law The Child Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act 1986 defined a child as a child below 14 years It does not ban child labour even in hazardous industries, but only in hazardous *processes* Domestic labour, family labour, agricultural labour or hotel labour is not banned at all This Act does not stop children working in match box and fire work industry in Shivakasi, glass industry in Ferozabad or carpet industry in Mirzapur and Kashmir but only in hazardous processes in them So in fact the law offers working children little, if any protection

Another argument is that India would lose foreign exchange both in carpet making, and in matchbox industry If we want to keep multinationals out of match industry we must allow Shivakasi to employ chidlren and if we want to compete with Pak, Irani and Afghan carpets we must permit children in carpet making Yet another argument in favour of child labour is of technological requirements Carpets need fine knots which only little fingers can make.

The battery of arguments in favour of child labour is indeed formidable, combining concern for children with patriotic concern for the economy and informed concern for technology However, if we examine these arguments and certain other policies of the government and provisions of the Constitution, we will realise that India cannot afford to continue child labour

Take the argument of need to work One reason why children need to work is that thier parents are unemployed Carpet, match box, glass—in all these industries the children work, parents sit at home If the parents worked we could insist on the children being sent to school We have nearly 20 million child labourers in India, according to the estimate of the National Sample Survey If they are withdrawn from the labour force India will not grind to a halt The jobs will be done by grown up men and women A child may say that he or she works because otherwise he would starve, perhaps the parents also may say so, but the government of any country cannot shake off its obligation by using this argument The goverment must create an economy in which children play and learn while parents work If this is done then there will be no need to have a Child Labour Act to protect working children

As to the argument about earning foreign exchange and keeping multinationals out, it is almost beneath one's dignity to answer it This argument could be used to justify any injustice, including slavery and prostitution It is difficult to believe that India can only keep out multinationals in match industry by employing children It is equally difficult to agree that machines cannot be invented which will enable grown up fingers to make small carpet knots Indeed some carpet manufacturers have said children eat less, work longer and earn less, also occupy less space!

But if problems appear insurmountable, India needs to take a policy decision Do we want to eradicate child labour? In that case we must bear the costs How much do we spend on our defence budget? How much does even a single submarine cost? Why do we allow that foreign exchange to go out of the country? Because we value our frontiers above foreign exchange That is the kind of hard policy choice we need to make over child labour

Let me now turn to the second part of my arguments, that the basic framework of the social democratic state, as well the key policies of successive governments cannot be implemented if child labour continues I would like to focus on three crucial areas family planning, eradication of bonded labour and implementation of democracy

As long as child labour continues it is "profitable" for the poor to have more children Each child starts bringing income by the age of five So long as parents do not get jobs, it is essential for them to have more and more children Child labour in most industries is thrown out by the age of 14 So unless there are younger brothers and sisters to succeed, the family will starve even more than they do In north India one is constantly coming across child domestic servants The father takes the year's salary in advance and departs He uses the child as his capital, his investment, involving hardly any cost If we want family planning to succeed parents must work and children must go to school

The correlation between literacy and family planning has long been established The higher the level of education, the greater the acceptance of family planning This is particularly so where women receive some education The child who goes to school instead of to work, becomes a cost, a burden to his parents But that child when it becomes a literate parent, decides against having a larger family than he or she can look after Child labour and family planning are essentially opposed to each other We must abolish child labour if we really want to make family planning a success It can only succeed if people adopt it, not by government enforcing it, even China has not been successful at that

Bonded labour is a more respectable name for slavery The poor landless labourer becomes bonded because he has no money for illness, death and marriage He can never repay the loan, his son takes on the burden after his death The man becomes bonded because he has no skills, but at the age of 14 they are dismissed and the skills become useless They have no option but to live off their siblings, and if they are lucky to get a loan, they become bonded

The Bonded Labour Abolition Act abolished Bonded Labour in 1976 Yet bonded labour continues to grow Unskilled, resourceless children of the poor keep on swelling the ranks of the bonded labour Here too the finding is that children with some basic education pick up better skills, and stay on in the profession A child who enters the work place after even primay schooling at the age of 14 will earn much more and stay on longer, than the eight year old who will leave at 14, with nothing to show for his or her work Article 45 of the Constitution enjoins upon the state to introduce free, universal, compulsory education for all till the age of 14 This must be done

Finally, our Constitution declares India to be a socialist democratic republic An illiterate democracy is a contradiction in terms Democracy implies equality of opportunity How can the illiterate half ever hope to seize any opportunity? How can child labour contribute to the democratic goal? At the moment only 3 percent families send their children to universities Of the remaining 97 percent few get as far as class eight Even with reservations for Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes, this is the picture Reservations for other backward castes will not make a difference Where 3 percent families hold the reins, the system is democratic only in name And, the 97 percent families contribute neither in decision making nor in administration They are kings only on election day

If we want our policies to work, if we want India to be a better place to live in, we cannot afford to have child labour In the short run, banning child labour involves an expense, it does create some economic problems But if we look beyond the present, a democratic India with controlled fertility and a labour force free of exploitation cannot be built on child labour This is why India cannot afford to have child labour

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Child in Society

Towards another future

Thomas Matthai

Born free and equal, a child comes into the world with immeasurable possibilities that need to be brought out by parent and teacher, within a congenial family and community, with understanding and care and with least hurt to the child's personality In *any* vision of a nation's destiny, the present and future of childhood must be central

A cradle of civilization, freed of its colonial past to become a democratic republic and to ensure "social, economic and political justice" for *all* its citizens, it should not be hard for India to respect the identity and autonomy of each of her children, assuring a safe social and physical environment for all of them to come into their own Nothing less is required by a commitment to her history, to the memory of some of the finest minds ever who lived in this land, to the hundred year struggle for freedom spanning two centuries

In a sense, the struggle continues, as it must, in this fiftyfirst year of India's Independence For, the conditions of child life have substantially changed only for some, who have had a chance to liberate their political, ideally for the common good But then, at least an equal number, prominently including girls, do not have had that chance and for many among them, it is already too late, indeed for generations of children, hundreds of million, literally

That children should be marginalised in their milieu on this scale in India is an irony For here was a society, which — for all its feudal warts and irrespective of the level of material sufficiency — neither neglected nor segregated, neither pampered nor exploited children Without cultural constraints, children grew up integral to society, gradually merged and learned from adult life as soon as they were able to There is no other credible explanation how a culture could have survived unbroken and evolved through the millennia India could outlive periodic depradations by invaders (or insiders) because of the integrity of the family and the extended family — which also beckoned the eternal vision of the oneness of humanity The versatile potential of the child, in India as elsewhere, has never been in doubt, only the opportunity to express it has varied, unconscionably

The quality of child life is influenced primarily by the human environment — the mother, the family and the community, in that order Their motivation and capability, in turn, are sustained by the prevailing ethical and spiritual norms, for human relationship, at its core, is spiritual in character, more so between child and adult The child's environment, including the safety of whatever physical surroundings it is born in, is also conditioned by the socio-political system that oversees its management

The political-administrative apparatus that emerged in the post-Independence phase was almost romantically high on ambition on behalf of India's children but average on understanding, capability and therefore performance Children are not reared in separate social boxes, nor can their development happen in compartments of subject catagories Rhetoric on 'the whole child' does not address the reality of what passes for 'development administration' Sentiment cannot stand in for action The nature and extent of this national immobilism go far beyond the realm of child care and development and is traceable to what can only be called a bureau-cratic culture of imperial lineage

India attempted virtually a social revolution through centralised development planning, with hardly any cadre of workers to bring about the momentous change The well-meaning politician took advice from the multipurpose bureaucrat, trained in the ways of the empire, mainly for maintaining law and order and collecting taxes India's children — over a 100 million in 1947, now nearing four times that — were expected to be picked up by this slow train to an imagined world One of the many results of this experiment with the unknown is that today around half the 960 million people of India are in or close to poverty — of which children are the first and most vulnerable victims

In Gandhian words, this was sinning against the light There are people still who recall with nostalgia, how, several years before Independence, and indeed as part of the freedom movement itself, there was a politically fuelled, multidimensioned "Constructive Programme" It served to build confidence and group self-reliance in small, plural communities through people-led effort to achieve basic education, village sanitation, health care and hygiene, women's participation, among other down-to-earth measures for unity in the community, for organising peasants and artisans, for economic freedom and equality In fact, the freedom struggle became a mass movement only because of the promise and prospect it offered people to improve their rapidly declining living standards because of external and domestic exploitation Sending the coloniser safely home was a corollary

Those who doubt if poverty

can be reduced through such a simple design of basic development, have only to stir out into the countryside to see self-managing village clusters where all the children are at school, and no able-bodied adult is without work—thanks to organized voluntary effort These examples are not many but people have taken into their own hands the function of saving and shaping their future, expecting little from the government beyond removing the hurdles in the access to their entitlements under the existing political order

Contemporary experience show two broad ways of supporting chidlren, besides the vibrant now-neglected Indian experiment, just mentioned during the run-up to our political democracy It took countries like England and Germany a couple of centuries of economic growth through industrialisation to have enough wealth to share opportunities with the population as a whole, in order to move from Dickensian levels of poverty to better standards of living The former centrally planned economies of Eastern Europe took a different route to release children's potential as the foun-dation of the whole structure of their State-centred society China for its part, did not abandon this path, yet kept the process firmly rooted in the family structure

The post-Independence phase of political administrative management of what is currently being called human and social development, seems to have lost its way in a forest of files We tried to combine—and we have not given up as yet — the capitalist growth path (where freedom and equality and justice for all would await better days) with state-controlled planning, the hallmark of non-democratic socialism Plan after five-year plan, we have managed to achieve, at the cost of our children, the worst of both the worlds—though we had within our grasp a tested third way

For the record, let us note that the first five year plan 1951-56 was a hurried non-plan The ambitious second plan was replete with good intentions and set the style for what can only be called centralised, non-rigorous investment planning

In the mandatory homage in the penultimate chapters of its massive verbiage, education, health and welfare receive step-motherly attention, through token investment mainly for institution-building and for reaching some modest physical targets It formally inaugurated the *age of the contractor* we continue to live in A well-known independent economist once seriously commented that the seventh five year plan was 'the seventh attempt at the same plan' Now we are in the ninth

For the first time, the third five-year plan included, in the 'welfare' package, some provision for *child welfare* Since then, as if to keep up with global fashion, we have had a national policy on children (which explicitly reveals a mindset that views the child, not as an autonomous person with the human rights of a young citizen, but as a useful piece of possession) We have, for some years now, a 'ministry of human resource development', a harmless exercise in window-dressing perhaps, yet suggestive that a child is like some resource input to feed the factory that is India Incorporated

Space does not allow details on how the central goverment remote-controls the so-called 'social sector' When in trouble, it promises more money to that starved sector, only to flow into a leaking bucket

To return to children, it is far from clear how a central, department for children, with its own minor programming axe to grind, can help the 370 million children—unless it redefines its humbler role as one of effectively monitoring of what numerous other ministries like health, education, labour and others do to children and what happens to their right to live and to develop There is, for instance, a National Children's Board, presided over by none other than the incumbent prime minister, and which has—perhaps for good reason—not met for many years now There is a somewhat similar National Nutrition Council, non-functioning except when it turns into a jousting ground for competing ministries, the planning commission included As a rule, at the working level, the ministries do not talk to (only talk at) one another, no matter the consensus reached at cabinet meetings The 'bhavans' of Delhi are littered with defunct inter-ministerial bodies The Indian State - be it at the centre or in the states — is well and truly distanced from the people, even more from the realities of child life

What then could be the role of the governments in Delhi and in the states, in relation to children? Once it is accepted that children are best looked after by their parents in the family and community setting, the task of the 'big' governments is to extend the kind of assistance needed but not actually available This must be done through democratic processes and channels and not on benevolent impulses After all, an elected local government is the community's one and only political organization It is now in place, to varying degree of effectiveness and accountability, in more and more villages and slums

It is therefore possible and necessary to restore to the Indian child the right to be cared for by the family in the community, with their capability locally strengthened as required That is the way children would like it

Thomas Matthai has worked with the Government and also UNICEF He was editor of the weekly Democratic World and the quarterly Future

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS (AUGUST 10-16, 1997)

NATIONAL

August 10

- Results of the contest for 10 elected members of the Congress Working Committee are announced on the concluding day of the Congress session at Calcutta. Ahmed Patel (with 664 votes), Jitendra Prasada (654), Madhavrao Scindia (612), Tariq Anwar (526), Pranab Mukherjee (503), R.K. Dhawan (421), Arjun Singh (382), Ghulam Nabi Azad (349), Sharad Pawar (344) and Vijay Bhaskar Reddy (331) make the grade while Rajesh Pilot loses by five votes to Reddy.
- At a crowded press conference Congress President Sitaram Kesri states that he would give adequate representation to SC/STs and women in the 10 nominated members. He announces he had requested Mrs Sonia Gandhi to join and he was keen "to induct her in the CWC".
- After a meeting of the four Left parties, CPI-M General Secretary Harkishan Singh Surjeet says a delegation of the Left will meet the PM to press for passing the Women's Reservation Bill, the implementation of the Targeted Public Distribution System and the Agricultural Workers' Bill in this very session.
- Reputed heart specialist Dr Naresh Trehan of Escorts Heart Centre pronounces that former Bihar Chief Minister Laloo Prasad Yadav is definitely suffering from heart problems.
- President of Samajwadi Party Mulayam Singh Yadav, the Defence Minister, tells reporters at Lucknow that some UP bureaucrats were bending backwards to please their bosses and he would set up a commission to probe their politically motivated activities if his party comes to power in the State.

August 11

- Left parties, Congress and BJP Members of Parliament demand that the government unequivocally condemn US President Bill Clinton's remark that "US presence should be felt heavily in South Asia" and State Department official George Pickert's statement that Jammu and Kashmir is a "disputed territory".
- Union Cabinet decides to re-introduce in the Rajya Sabha the Presidential and Vice-Presidential (Amendment) Bill which was defeated on August 7.
- Defence Ministry sets up a Committee headed by Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, Scientific Advisor to the Defence Minister, to look into every purchase of defence equipment.
- UP CM Mayawati ducks a slipper aimed at her while leaving the house after the Speaker turned down the Opposition's notice for an adjournment motion and debate on the CM's remark blaming the Janata Dal and Samajwadi Party for desecration of the statues of Dr B.R. Ambedkar, Mahatma Gandhi and Indira Gandhi.
- Russian Cultural Centre in Chennai, situated near the house of Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi, is rocked by a bomb blast injuring a guard on duty. Handwritten handbills in Tamil, found near the site criticise celebrations of the 50 years of independence when half the population is hungry and poor. A similar device explodes 30 minutes later, and 10 km away, outside the office of the State Election Commission and injures the cleaner of a lorry.
- West Bengal CM Jyoti Basu, who is in Delhi for the CPI-M Politburo meeting, says the Congress attack on the Left is an attempt to divide the United Front. "The Congress is afraid of the Left because we are the unifying factor," he adds.
- New Delhi-bound Rajdhani Express from Guwahati is derailed by a bomb blast activated by remote control. Seven bogies slip off the rails twisted under the impact but no one was hurt. A second bomb is defused by security forces soon after.

August 12

- Some constituents of the United Front and part of the Opposition oppose the move to take up the Women's Reservation Bill for discussion so vehemently in the Lok Sabha that the Deputy Speaker has to adjourn the House. Speaker P.A. Sangma convenes a meeting of the Business Advisory Committee but there is no consensus and he decides to proceed with other business of the House.
- Rajesh Pilot decides to ask the Congress President for a recount of the tenth and last round of the recently-held elections to the Congress Working Committee.
- Karnataka Higher Education Minister B. Somasekhar resigns as a judicial inquiry has been ordered on the charge of copying in Law examinations.
- Bodo militants raid a cluster of Bengali-inhabited houses in a village in Kamrup district of Assam, round up all the men and tie them in a mango grove and shoot them. Six die on the spot and one is struggling for his life in the Guwahati Medical College Hospital.
- Film producer and owner of T-Series Cassettes Gulshan Kumar is shot dead as he comes out of a Shiva temple in Bharat Nagar, Andheri (Mumbai).

August 13

- PM Gujral tells the Lok Sabha that all parties were divided on the Women's Reservation Bill and the government would not ram the legislation through without evolving a consensus.
- Supreme Court bans sexual harrassment of women at workplaces and defines sexual harassment directing that the rules of government and public sector bodies relating to conduct while at work should also include rules and regulations prohibiting sexual harassment. The Court also rules that all private employers should take immediate steps to include the regulations under the Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946.
- United Front Steering Committee decides to defer the question of petroleum price hike till August 21 when it meets again to take a final decision.
- Bahujan Samaj Party President Kanshi Ram says they have no plans now to extend their alliance with BJP in other states or to continue with it in the next elections. He assures that Ms Mayawati shall hand over the Chief Ministership of UP to the BJP after completing her six months in office.

August 14

- President K.R. Narayanan sends a warm message of greetings to Pakistani President Farooq Ahmad Leghari and Prime Minister I.K. Gujral greets his counterpart Nawaz Sharif on hotline on the golden jubilee of Pakistan

- Core Committee meeting of the UF decides to increase the price of petrol by one Rupee per litre and that of diesel by even less
- Defence Ministry decides to make 900 files on Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and the Indian National Army, founded by him, available to researchers and scholars and place them, possibly, in the National Archives
- PM Gujral in an interview with ANI television brushes aside the remark that India did not achieve much in the past 50 years and says "Our economy has taken off, agriculture is growing fast, we have a strong middle class, larger than the whole of Europe put together and a market which is again larger than that of the whole Europe "

August 15

- President K R Narayanan, addressing the midnight joint session of the Parliament, regrets the continuing atrocities on women, Scheduled Castes and Tribes and the increasing violence, opportunism, valueless power politics and corruption He exhorts the people to come in the forefront to fight against corruption, communalism, casteism and criminalisation of politics
- PM I K Gujral in his address to the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort, enumerates the country's achievements with a sense of pride, promises social and economic packages for the uplift of the poor and the backward with special attention to the betterment of the lot of women and the girl child He singles out corruption as the most serious malaise calling it treason from within and calls for a *satyagraha* to socially boycott givers and takers of corruption
- Dr Farooq Abdullah, Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir, unfurls the national flag in Srinagar and announces in unequivocal terms "Accession of Jammu & Kashmir with the Indian Union is a historic reality and no power on earth can undo it " He tells the militants that they could go to Pakistan if they so desire but he would not allow them to make the life of the innocent people miserable
- Militants in the North-East give a call to boycott the golden jubilee celebrations and kill six people and set fire to Government installations in Assam, Tripura and Nagaland

August 16

- Governor of Andhra Pradesh Krishan Kant is elected Vice-President of India winning 441 votes against Akali leader Surjit Singh Barnala's 273 The United Front, the RJD and the Congress supporting Krishan Kant with a combined strength of 516 MPs are annoyed at the number of invalid votes and apparent cross-voting
- Congress President Kesri nominates Kerala leader AK Antony and former Finance Minister Dr Manmohan Singh to the Congress Working Committee The remaining nominations are to follow
- PM Gujral tells the Confederation of Indian Industry "We are setting up a cell in the PMO to directly deal with all complaints on corruption Those who are harassed must stand up "
- Government of India decides to sign the UN Convention against Torture and other Forms of Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- The Agricultural Workers' Bill, providing for payment of maternity benefits, prohibition of employing female/ workers after 7 pm, insurance cover and several other reliefs, cannot be passed by Parliament as the powerful farmers' lobby backed by some Chief Ministers opposes it
- BJP Vice-President S S Bhandari reiterates in New Delhi the party's decision in favour of Kalyan Singh to be the Chief Minister after Ms Mayawati's agreed six-months tenure ends in September

INTERNATIONAL

August 10

- Swiss Federal Department clears the papers of Karsan Chairman Tuncay Alunkas and of the company's Vice-President for extradition to India as two principal accused in the Rs 133-crore urea scam
- British Secretary of State for Northern Ireland Mo Mowlam tells the *Sunday Telegraph* she was not yet prepared to discuss freeing Republican or Loyalist prisoners, as demanded by the IRA's political wing Sinn Fein, but "as the ceasefire holds, other options become possible"
- Cuban President Fidel Castro warns in a TV interview, in the course of an international conference of unions, that "a return to capitalism would be the most terrible thing "and he refers to the conditions in the former socialist countries of East Europe
- Pakistan authorities deploy more paramilitary troops in Punjab in a bid to halt sectarian violence which has claimed 40 lives in the last 10 days
- Mission of the US envoy for West Asian peace Dennis Ross runs into trouble as Israel insists that their security concern must be addressed as top priority in the wake of the double suicide bombing in Jerusalem on July 30 and Palestine demands that Israel unconditionally lift the military blockade imposed on the West Bank and Gaza Strip

August 11

- Nine-member Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) hold an emergency session of Foreign Ministers and accept Ung Huot as the elected First Prime Minister of Cambodia dismissing the claims of Prince Norodom Ranariddh
- Commander of the opposition forces Ahmad Shah Masood says in a written answer to *Reuter's* questions "We are ready for talks with Taliban without conditions, under the UN anywhere except Pakistan even though we are at the gates of Kabul "
- Bangladesh rejects Chakma refugee leaders' demand for involvement of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees as one of the conditions for repatriation and resettlement of over 400,000 refugees
- A discount department store is looted and destroyed by fire in Nashville (Tennessee, USA) hours after the killing of a Black murder suspect by a white policeman
- Nearly 3000 Irish Republican Army supporters march in central Belfast to demand a negotiated end to British rule
- UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, speaking after his meeting with Swedish PM Goeran Persson in Stockholm, says US pressure on the UN to reform and cutting the US contribution could "poison the atmosphere" between Washington and the UN headquarters

- South Africa reimposes its ban on arms sale to Turkey, fixing a $ 200 million sale of attack helicopters in view of Turkey's violation of human rights and illegal occupation of a part of Cyprus

August 12

- Pakistan High Commission in London warns that screening of the Channel IV film on Mohammad Ali Jinnah would trigger off riots because the title *Secret History — A Bloody Partition* is disrespectful and Christopher Lee, playing the role of the founder of Pakistan, is best known for portraying Dracula, the dreaded vampire
- US envoy for peace in West Asia Dennis Ross hits out at some Israeli measures taken in the name of security He says, after a meeting with Yasser Arafat in Ramallah (East Bank), these measures "do not relate really to security and could be counter-productive"
- Cambodian King Norodom Sihanouk meets in Beijing the Cambodian strongman Hun Sen, the newly elected First Prime Minister Ung Huot and Acting Head of State Chea Sim and says that his abdication letter is ready The abdication offer is turned down by Hun Sen
- Bangladesh leader of Opposition Khaleda Zia tells the Dhaka based foreign correspondents at a news conference "We do not harbour anymosity towards our closest neighbour, India Rather we would like to expand economic and ecological cooperation"
- Poll conducted in UK by the *Guardian*/ICM shows only 48 per cent of the polled think that Britain would be worse off without its royal family
- Jay Kim, the first Korean-American elected to the US Congress, pleads guilty of accepting illegal campaign contribution He faces up to three years in jail and fines of more than $ 400,000
- Australia, Brazil, Canada, the Czech Republic, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Ivory Coast, Jamaica, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, South Africa, South Korea and Sweden, comprising the G-16, give "crucial endorsement" to Secretary-General Kofi Annan's UN reform plan

August 13

- A CIA official will monitor the probe by Israeli and Palestinian authorities into last month's Jerusalem marketplace bombing, allowing the US to be the referee in the dispute whether Palestine was working hard enough to contain Islamic militants
- Wealthiest Cambodian tycoon Teng Bunma claims he helped bankroll the coup last month ousting Prince Norodom Ranariddh, the then First Prime Minister
- Chinese language newspaper *Ming Pao* of Hong Kong says the Chinese Communist Party will open its 15th Congress on September 15 and end it before October 1, the National Day, ahead of President Jiang Zemin's official visit to the US
- ABC News reports citing US military souces that US French and British commandos are being trained in Europe to capture Bosnian war criminals, possibly, a few months from now
- UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in Sweden on an official visit, is seeking private and NGO funding for a proposed $ one billion "revolving fund" to assist the cash strapped UN, says his spokesman Fred Eckhard
- British Home Secretary introduces a draft legislation making it obligatory for the police to acquire permission for phone-tapping from a regional commissioner and a retired or serving magistrate The opposition says it fails to provide enough guarantees for civil liberties

August 14

- Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif speaking at the flag-hoising ceremony in Islamabad says Pakistan initiated dialogue with India because of a growing realisation in both countires that the bitter 50-year-old Kashmir dispute should be resolved "The conflict and arms race between the two countries wasted billions of dollars,' he says But in a speech in the National Assembly he praises Kashmiris fighting against the Indian troops "in the two-thirds of Kashmir under New Delhi's control" and promises moral support to "*mujahideen* (crusaders) fighting for their independence"
- Mohammad Ali Jinnah's Secretary for three years S S Pirzada says in Karachi "If Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah were to visit Pakistan now, he would be quite disappointed at the state of affairs"
- Israel lifts military blockade of Ramallah and Hebron on the West Bank but it remains in place in Bethlehem and surrounding villages as well as at the borders with Israel which prevents 100,000 Palestinians from reaching their job
- United States demands that Libyan Government extradite two Libyans accused of masterminding the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am jet over Lockerbie, Scotland White House spokesman Michael McCurry says any other bid to get the sanctions against Libya lifted is a "fool's errand"

August 15

- US Postal Service issues eight cents and four cents Mahatma Gandhi postage stamps to mark the golden jubilee of Indian independence
- US Government decides to suspend temporarily operations at the Afghanistan Embassy in Washington with effect from August 21, because of "continuting contention among the Afghan factions in the Embassy"
- Japan and North Korea agree to hold talks next week in Beijing to establish diplomatic relations
- A Mastercard survey reveals that 10 per cent of Singapore citizens would like to leave the island state because of high costs and stressful life
- China decides to pump in $ one billion in an attempt to bail out Thailand's failing financial system and to safeguard China's own interests through Beijing's first known participation in a rescue package for a foreign country

August 16

- US President Bill Clinton announces a White House millenium project designed to usher in the next century with tributes to the past and the future The project will include White House lectures, a series of programmes sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts and a preservation programme run by the National Archives First Lady Hillary Clinton will oversee the project
- Nepalese Prime Minister Lokendra Bahadur Chand tells *The Kathmandu Post* that Maoist People's War, launched in February 1996, resorts to extortion and killings in the remote Northern hill districts and tough anti-terrorist laws are required to curb such intolerable activities
- Turkish Parliament enacts a school reform bill curtailing religion classes as demanded by the powerful military in their pronounced bid to keep the country secular ■

Posted at CPSO in New Delhi on August 22/23, 1997 Delhi Postal REGD No DL-11037/97
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Edited and published by Sumit Chakravartty *for* PERSPECTIVE PUBLICATIONS PRIVATE LTD, 1E/12, "Sewak House" (First Floor), Jhandewalan Extension, New Delhi-110055 Tel 7516763, 7516893 Fax 7519838 *Printed at* NEW DELHI PRINTERS, 20/7 Old Market, West Patel Nagar, New Delhi-110008 *Editor* Sumit Chakravartty *Editorial Adviser* Nikhil Chakravartty *General Manager* Praveen Mehta *Executive Manager* Jasjit Kay Nagra

Mainstream

VOL XXXV No 38 August 30,1997 Rs 7

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

Congress after Calcutta

C.B. MUTHAMMA

The Lost Half-Century

I.K. SHUKLA

The Estate of Bihar

SATYAPAL DANG

Improving Indo-Pak Ties in Golden Jubilee Year : What Is To Be Done?

PANCHANAN SAHA ON "NETAJI SUBHAS AND THE COMMUNAL PROBLEM IN INDIA"

Hawks' Attempt Misfires

If senior officials of the Indian Army are to be believed, the latest round of boider flare-up along the Line of Control (LoC) in J & K is part of the third phase of 'Operation Topac' under which Islamabad is pushing foreign mercenaries of the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, Harkat-ul-Ansar and Lashkar-e-Tolba across the border into the troubled State The opening of fire from the Pakistani side, according to authorities of the Defence Ministry, was as in the past integrally linked to the concerted efforts from the side of the Pakistani military establishment and intelligence agencies to facilitate the entry of insurgent groups into Indian territory before the passes get snowbound with the onset of winter making infiltration difficult and near impossible

These are familiar explanations which have to be coupled with recent developments throwing light on the ground reality in the Kashmir Valley Despite the sullen mood of the local populace who by no stretch of imagination have yet been won over to fight terrorism, the fact is that militancy in the Valley—partly indigenous and partly imported—is lately on the wane whatever the reasons There is no visible expression of any resentment, leave aside revulsion against the elected government of Farooq Abdullah regardless of the extent of popular support it enjoys at present That there were no untoward incidents in Kashmir during the August 15 Independence Day celebrations—despite the fact that this marked the golden jubilee of our freedom—may not be entirely due to the constructive spirit and positive approach of the Nawaz Sharif Government earnestly striving to mend fences with its neighbouring state where too the dispensation at the Centre is headed by such a personality as Inder Kumar Gujral who is equally sincerely wedded to the cause of improving India-Pakistan ties The weakening of the grip of militants on the situation in the Valley is an important contributory factor which just cannot be brushed aside

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In this context it is quite concievable that influential groups and figures in the Pakistani military-bureaucratic set-up hostile to the entire concept of developing amity and cooperative relations between Islamabad and New Delhi had decided to impede, if not disrupt, the process of Indo-Pak normalisation—currently set in motion by the serious negotiations at the official level talks headed by the two countries' Foreign Secretaries—by engineering such a border flare-up with the broader objective of causing larger trouble in J & K However, this too being nothing unusual did not come as a surprise to any knowledgeable and perceptive observer of the Indo-Pak scene

While the hawks in Pakistan are definitely itching to escalate tensions between our two countries, their counterparts here are not sitting idle Apart from prominent politicians, various lobbies in this country are quite active in deriding in various ways (not always directly) I K Gujral's painstaking moves to build the edifice of peace, understanding and harmony in the subcontinent through his allout efforts to improve ties with Pakistan without giving any quarter to jingoism The border flare-up provided them with a godsend opportunity to not only engage in their favourite pastime of Pakistan-bashing but also to 'expose' the 'danger' of evolving a policy-framework based on Gujral's 'utopia' In short, the warmongers on either side of the border felt emboldened to come out in the open in a bid to pursue their pernicious course of reviving the atmosphere of mutual suspicion,

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The Morning of Freedom

Faiz Ahmed Faiz wrote this poem when freedom came to this subcontinent and Pakistan attained statehood fifty years ago We are recalling these lines today on the occasion of the golden jubilee of the independence of our two countries just to emphasise that we both still have miles to go before we are able to unfold a radiant future for our two peoples

This strained light, this night-bitten dawn—
This is not the dawn we yearned for
This is not the dawn for which we set out
hoping that in the sky's wilderness
we would reach the final destination of the stars
Surely, the night's turgid sea will breathe its last on the inevitable shore
Surely, the boat of heart's agony will somewhere come to a stop
The engima of youthful blood—reductive hands—so many forsaken loves—plaintive looks
But irresistible was the radiant face of the dawn
even though love and beauty were within our reach
The subtle sorcery of desire, the aching tiredness
They say that the darkness has been severed from light
they say that the goal has been achieved
the predicament of the grief-stricken
has radically changed—
ecstasy of union is allowed
and the torment of separation forbidden
Torn nerves, glazed eyes, hearts on fire—
there is no cure for the disease of separation
From where did the morning breeze come
and where did it go?
The earthen lamp shrugs its head in despair,
the night is as oppressive as ever
The time for the liberation of heart and mind
has not come as yet
Continue your arduous journey,
this is not your destination

Faiz Ahmed Faiz
(translated from the original Urdu by Daud Kamal)

mistrust and hostility that plagued Indo-Pak ties till the other day

While these were also to be expected, what is significant is that the flare-up has failed to escalate tensions between the two states In fact responsible politicians and officials among those in authority have acted with commendable promptitude to ensure that the firing across the LoC does not cause any tangible setback to the process of Indo-Pak normalisation which the hostile forces in Islamabad in particular—as, for example, the Pakistani armed forces journal, *Al Hilal*, and the press close to the military establishment—were hoping for

This new, and thus noteworthy, development should not be attributed to the sagacity of the two Prime Ministers alone No doubt they deserve unreserved compliments for straining their nerves to defuse tensions But one must not lose sight of the growing movement for peace and amity at the popular level that has immensely strengthened Nawaz Sharif and Gujral facing stiff opposition from the hawks entrenched in the two countries' administrative apparatuses And the finest manifestation of that movement was seen in the streets of Calcutta at the fag end of 1996 following the joint convention of the Pakistan-India Peoples' Forum for Peace and Democracy unveiling as it did a new horizon of hope and expectation for all lovers of peace in our part of the world

One should not underestimate the strength of the enemies of peace and friendship between the two countries and their capacity to create mischief by fomenting trouble on the border as was done in the last few days One should also not be oblivious of all those in this country still thinking in terms of undoing the partition and "uniting" the two countries But what is most promising is the gradual swelling of the ranks of those in both the countries who wish to see India and Pakistan, while maintaining their distinct separate entities and sovereign status, jointly working together for the prosperity of our region

Through their activities and mutual interactions they are restoring something we had lost fifty years ago—trust It was that loss of trust which was responsible for taking such a heavy toll in terms of human lives at the time of partition Today slowly that element of trust is being brought back in our mutual relations It is yet to be manifested at the higher echelons of power where vested interests still reign supreme But it has started getting reflected at the popular level And that is what is most heartening fuelling as it does dreams of a better world in this part of the globe

The failure of the latest border flare-up to hamper the process of Indo-Pak normalisation is the clearest proof of the changing political landscape in South Asia It offers fresh evidence of the capacity of our two peaceloving peoples to withstand the pressures of the hawks and warmongers and foil their ulterior motives fired as they are with the intense urge to restore that very trust in our bilateral relationship (which is the best guarantee of resolving all our bilateral problems without the 'benevolence' of interested 'third party' mediators ever ready to drive a wedge between us)

August 27 S C

Congress after Calcutta

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

The grand passion of the present-day Congressman is fulfilled With almost bended knees the party President presented Sonia Gandhi in public before the Calcutta session to actively join and lead the party It is significant that on the fiftieth anniversary of independence of the country, the president of the premier national organisation should have concentrated on imploring one individual to join here and now but did not care to din into the ears of every listener that there could be no rest until Gandhiji's main behest on independence—to wipe out the tear of poverty from every eye in this vast country

If one has to judge from the point of view of vote-catching, it may be worth reminding ourselves that in the last fifty years, the most unexpected election victory came to Indira Gandhi when she raised the call of *Garibi Hatao,* just as in Pakistan, it was Bhutto's call for *Roti, Kapra, Makan,* which fetched him the phenomenal election results So long as poverty remains the curse over this subcontinent, the appeal of the largest number of our vast multitude would be to the call to end poverty whoever raises it

Not that no speaker at the Calcutta convention of the Congress raised it, but nobody made the fight against poverty as the central theme of any mass campaign Sitaram Kesri in one of his many asides has said that the fight against communalism is more important than the fight against corruption, but more than anything else it is the battle against poverty which is the key to mass upheaval even fifty years after independence The Congress members and supporters who crowded the Netaji Stadium did not bother to take up this challenge, so insensitive they have become to the needs and urges of the common humanity that they claim to represent Nobody need have any objection to Sonia Gandhi activating herself in the service of the Congress In fact, that would have been in the fitness of things rather than holding a *Dewani Khas* at 10 Janpath where Congress leaders and her courtiers need to come and pay their courtesy as if it is like calling on the Queen at the Buckingham Palace For the last seven years, she has permitted herself to be anointed as the holiest of the holy in the Congress, and today at the call of Sitaram Kesri she is being lionised as the deliverer of the Congress itself

◆

THOSE who have covered all the general elections in this country since independence are however clear that this "Soniaji advent" would bring no bumper crop for the Congress She can certainly be an active member who will attract a lot of interest out of public curiosity, but a general election is an exacting ordeal in which only sensationalism can hardly fetch dividends In Sonia Gandhi's case, there are quite a few liabilities which should be borne in mind by those who are keen on promoting her For one thing, her name is associated with the Bofors, perhaps more than that of Rajiv If as the Prime Minister of India, Rajiv declared such a serious scandal taking place under his very nose—even if we are to believe his testament before Parliament—there is little doubt in the public mind that whatever has come out of that case has gone to the benefit of the family from which she has come It is possible that the members of that family are outside the arms of the Indian law, it does not automatically follow that they are exonerated in the eyes of the people The public impression in this country is that greater part of the kickback from the Bofors has gone to the benefit of that family If Quattrochi is still remembered as an extra-smart publicity man for a well-known Italian firm, what was the reason behind his sudden disappearance and that too under circumstances which can hardly be called as dignified? Whatever little of the secrets of the Bofors papers have come out, there is no evidence to show that he was not entangled in the sub rosa operation, which seem to have ensnared the family

The tragic assassination of Rajiv Gandhi drew her all the sympathy of the country as a whole Young and old, rich and the poor, felt the loss It was a different thing for Rajiv who was practically dragged into politics by his mother For such a person to lose his life in a chequered political cross-fire is no doub eart-rending, and this country mourned it copiously or that This however does not mean that the same unce of sympathy is kept in for Sonia The loss f Rajiv is certainly a big loss personally for her and ther members of the family Hence, all the lament nd good wishes

But politics is a hard taskmaster If senior political eaders have to face the humiliation of being dragged o the law courts, one has to understand that at the ar of politics, anybody and everybody who is uspected to be guilty has to go through the ordeal f suspicion in the public eye There is no reason o believe that in the Bofors scandal, Sonia Gandhi s above the law The public of this country do not orget that And it would be the height of folly of he Congress party leaders if they calculate that the artyrdom of Indira Gandhi and her son would hine as a regenerated glory on Sonia Rather, the ery opposite would be the case and it may lead he Congress to disaster

This country has been going through difficult times There is unrest and distrust over a huge part of the country Confronting such a difficult situation, no party can take a cavalier attitude to problems The days of deceiving the public are over It is time serious thoughts were paid by each and every party, group or individual to seriously ponder how to get over this crisis and let this great country move on to its rightful place in the world of today However difficult the task may be, it is clear it can hardly be a quick-fix marionette The Congress is an old party, it has got seasoned leaders, at least that is what is claimed It would be unfair for the Congress and also for Sonia Gandhi to be placed in a situation like the present The Congress committed the great deception by putting her up as its saviour Nothing of the kind will happen Only the Congress will cover itself with disgrace and defeat ■

(August 16)

The Estate of Bihar

I.K SHUKLA

Turning an Indian State into a mere estate to be managed by his wife is by no means a major miracle just pulled off by a CM National amnesia enables us to lose track of miracles which have happened quite regularly in post-1947 India In fact, both our society and polity have proved surprisingly 'accommodative' vis-a-vis a plethora of such miracles Remember, in the wake of Zamindari Abolition, many dogs and cats in Bihar staked their claims as landowners, and they won Every dog had his day Many had their days even in court And, we progressed from precedent to precedent Miracles too have a pedigree

When Nehru had his chauffeur Hari overnight transmogrified into an MP, we didn't wince We then sang hosannas to his 'democratic' spirit Maybe, the Laloo version of democratic disposal looks quaint But is it really? One version of Nehru's penchant for democratic disposal was his peremptory dismissal of the Kerala Government in the fifties at the democratic instigation of the then Congress President Indira Gandhi It was not mere personal pique when Dr Lohia those days always referred to her as the Queen in his coffee house broadsides She invested the words 'accountability' and 'commitment' with entirely new meanings, meanings which were both radical and startling And, the nation acquiesced

Dynastic democracy has taken quite a hold in India Our construction of democracy has proved fairly ingenious Were it not so, Gujral, the PM, would have, as constitutionally he was obliged to, dismissed the Laloo Government after the decks were cleared, however belatedly, by the Bihar Governor, who lagged behind none in taking his own good time to stir into action

◆

COMPARE the two situations in Kerala and Bihar Kerala had posed no threat to either the polity or the Constitution It was sacked for performing Bihar went scot free polluting the perverting both the polity and the Constitution It mounted a challenge of monstrous magnitude to the institutional bases of a democracy under siege And, this crowning glory in the blessed year of our golden jubilee as a 'free' nation!

We learn from our times, and our paradigms When Kesri upset the clay cart of the UF rule by withdrawing Congress support to the Deve Gowda Government, he was 'accommodated', instead of being cut down to size But the fear of elections, that the jaded constituents desperately sought to avoid, dictated 'compromise' It is such compromises that cumulatively pave the way for, and become identified with, corruption One principled stand on the part of the UF Government would have enhanced its stature in the eyes of the nation, and it would have won any subsequent elections hands down

Let me quote a few lines from a personal letter that I received recently from a friend in Amritsar to corroborate the above estimate (Such feedback helps fill in the gaps left by the media)

> What a hell politically this country became since Kesri became acting President of the Congress! He did the devil's job But could not the UF dissolve Parliament and order fresh elections? The rabid step of Kesri so much angered the people and such sympathy for Deve Gowda had been generated, that the UF could have been returned with absolute majority in tune with the aspirations of the people Alas! The UF politicians, as it was with their opponents and whom they used to criticise, too proved suckers for power! They bowed, they compromised, they propitiated their Big Brother
>
> Enter Gujral And the whole country is waiting with bated breath for the political bolt to strike! The Congress and the UF gamesters declare they want to keep away the communal forces from grabbing power, not realising that their every step is paving the way for the communal forces As things stand and are moving, there is little doubt left for the BJP to grab the coveted power at the hustings It would not be surprising People will help the BJP The UF and the Congress have made the people helpless And then woe the day! Already people have started talking of the pre-Emergency days!

And uneasy as it makes me, I cannot dismiss the above assessment as either too scary or sensational The gentleman in question, a scholar of Urdu and English whom I have had the privilege of knowing closely for over two decades, has been a committed secularist with a passionate concern for an egalitarian dispensation in India And, as if to vindicate him, the Congress is joining forces with the BJP in Gujarat to oust the Shankar Singh Vaghela Government, and instal Urmilaben Patel as the Chief Minister She is the widow of one of the most corrupt Chief Ministers in India, Chimanbhai Patel, *Aya Ram-Gaya Ram* nonpareil Whatever the BJP could not garner in its *jayanti yatra* is being handed to it on a platter by the Congress support for Hindu communalism, support for criminal casteism

As to the excerpt above, does the metropolitan media in India reflect such anguished configurations? Or, it is obsessively gorging on the grapevine an spinning spiels, rendering news and analysis int titillating twaddle dressed up as op-eds?

◆

WHILE it is true that Laloo has only been charge sheeted, not yet convicted, and the media assumin the role of the police and the judiciary would bod ill for the nation, it must be admitted that Lalo shook the nation as none else had done thus fa He held it hostage to his needs He gave in onl when he had completed his arrangements in regar to succession Even at the cost of being labelled a cynical, let us ask Was he not given this kid glov treatment because he is a Janata Dal warlord Technically he may be justified or correct Was Ne Delhi so too in 'promoting' Joginder Singh?

But this technicality can be strained as the ex Premier, Narasimha Rao, has done In the matter o St Kitts forgery he said he only obeyed the order of the then Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi Can h substantiate this assertion by something in th nature of an order issued to this effect by Raji Gandhi? Why should his verbal plea absolve hin from abetment and collusion? Why didn't he deer it necessary to ask for Rajiv's written orders in th matter? Does it not amount to willing complicity i an act adjudged as criminal by both morality an courts? In a similar situation Gujral had asked Mr Gandhi to give him her written order so that h could comply The price was his dismissal, a anticipated by Gujral Why did not Narasimha Ra act similarly?

And, for the layman, the common citizen, or th voter, is it not a sordid and sleazy spectacle to fin that no *hawala* scam ever occurred, that India ha it own Rasputins in the corridors of powe masquerading as *swamis* and *tantriks*, astrologer and palm-readers?

And, if the BJP-VHP had Ganesha sip milk from spoons globally on a certain day and thus established the primacy of miracles in Indian politics, would i not be fair to grant the Janata Dal, personified i Laloo, its modicum of miracles? Anyway, it look more humane and pragmatic Somehow it score over the supernatural intervention that the saffro brigade commandeers so blithely

Let us concede all the political parties their fai quota of miracles This will redound to our glory as an ancient land, albeit mired in mendacity, mayhem, and of course, miracles ■

The Lost Half-Century

C B MUTHAMMA

Within the first few days of his assumption of charge as the Prime Minister, I K Gujral was reported to have said that India was on the threshold of greatness. It was perhaps for the first time since independence that a national leader had talked about a vision of greatness for this country. But there was no indication of what precisely he saw as such a vision or on what grounds he felt we were on the "threshold".

A great country or a great power? The two are not the same, though there is, necessarily, an overlap between the two. A country could have great economic and military might and be a great power, but be brutal and uncivilised, both within its own society and in its dealings with other peoples and countries. On the other hand, there cannot be a civilised society or any kind of greatness for a country if masses of its citizens live in dire poverty and distress, if there is conflict, injustice and insecurity in its society, and it is, in its totality, unable to face the world on equal terms. The many intangibles that spell the difference between a great power and a great country, the essential ethical dimension to national and international life, are unsustainable without an adequate material basis to its life—internally in a strong economy, and externally both in terms of its economy and its national security.

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WHEN India became free half a century ago, there were undoubtedly many people in this country who believed that India was set on a journey to a high ideal. With its pioneering role in terminating the colonial system, India had a strong sense of mission, of building a just and free society in its own territory, and a new, equitable international order, which would put an end to the domination of one country by another. In pursuing these objectives, India had impressive assets to give it a sense of capability and of potential. It had always had a global identity, by virtue of its size, its strategic location, its material resources, its great and advanced civilisation and its long history of achievement in intellectual, spiritual and material fields. It comprehended within itself many races, religions, languages, ethnicities and cultures, leading to a tradition of rich diversity, of tolerance, of sanity and humanity. Its intelligent and hard-working people had, during the freedom struggle, shown their capacity to face hardships, to be loyal to their leaders, to be peaceful, disciplined and law-abiding, and to make sacrifices if the cause demanded it. To these precious assets were added the high trust and admiration in which India was held by the subjugated peoples of the world, who had begun to fight their own wars of independence, and who saw India as a symbol of a new and just world order.

No national leadership could have asked for better auspices under which to get started. With these priceless advantages, what progress has India made? And how does one measure progress?

It can be argued in any situation that progress is being made. It can be argued that even during the colonial period India made progress. But progress, to be meaningful has to be measured against our needs, our capacities, and against contemporary standards of life. Our green revolution has to be set against the fact that one-third of our population—which almost equals our entire population at independence—lives below the poverty line and does not get enough to eat, and another third lives in varying degrees of poverty. Our achievements in higher education have to be seen against the fact of one of the highest illiteracy rates in the world, the fact that while we boast of highly qualified scientists, a large proportion of them emigrate as India is unable to utilise their services, while, at the other end of the scale, our illiterates practice *sati*, human sacrifice and child marriage. Thus our needs are obviously not met by the "progress" we have made on different fronts. As to our capacity, there is no doubt that our people who inherit centuries of skills and traditions, and a comprehension of the symbiotic link between the individual and society, would have been able to put their energies to individual and collective effort, if only permitted to do so. If, instead of taking away from them both money and the decision-making power, they were allowed to run

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their affairs, immeasurably better results would have been achieved

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It is a known fact that a high proportion of the taxes collected by the government are paid in indirect taxes, by all including the poor and sub-poor of this country If they could retain that money and be given the responsibility, at district level, of implementing the compulsory universal education directive of the Constitution we might have made better progress than we have, in achieving universal education It was openly admitted by Rajiv Gandhi as the Prime Minister that only about 15 per cent of the sums appropriated for development reached their target Similarly, many of the State Governments depend substantially for their revenues on alcohol selling licences They actively promote the sale of alcohol, destroying family life among the masses of the poor across the countryside, destroying their hopes of health and happiness, and of hopes for education and a better future for their children The government thus pushes these millions of people even further down the scale than they already are This process cannot be called "progress" The government's move to make education a fundamental right is neither here nor there There are plenty of laws and constitutional provisions that remain dead letters

If the Central and State Governments issue orders or formulate policies—for example, on deforestation —that the people do not want, there is nothing the people can do about it If district and village authorities are answerable to the State Government, they are not responsive to the needs or wishes of the local people, who are thus left without a role in their own development But the governments, on the other hand, do not do what the people cannot do, as for example, formulating manpower policies, land use policies, water resources policies, etc It is a different matter that where policies do exist, namely, forest policy, education policy, child labour policy, etc these are not implemented

Under these circumstances, such progress as is made is inadequate and out of date Illiterate and backward people, who get no help with the upgradation of their productive skills, whether for earning their livelihood or for competing in advanced contemporary skills in competition with modern day production techniques in the developed world, are at a total disadvantage, and by the same token, the country is at a disadvantage in the global marketplace

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It is often said that the growth of our population is the real problem In fact it is not a lower population growth that fuels development, it is the other way round It is the growth in education and the quality of life that curtail population growth—a fact that has been proven all over the world, including in our own country in our own time

Our government, by its unbroken record of failure from independence onward both on education and the improvement of quality of life, has allowed the growth of an irreversible problem in the shape of a huge and unmanageable population Pious platitudes are spoken about the human resources of this country and development of these resources—these are mindless slogans picked up at second hand to cover failures An outsize population, uneducated, underfed, undernourished, brain-damaged, physically incapable, is not a "resource" in any meaningful sense

There are no quick-fix solutions A governmental structure that could not effectively tackle the problems of the three hundred and fifty million population that we had at independence is unlikely to tackle the problems of nearly a billion population now

Much is made of our economic liberation and globalisation It is an exercise that concentrates on money, like our national planning does and not on people Our cities are choked with slums, which are continually being swollen by an influx of people from the impoverished rural hinterland Dharavi, Bombay's largest slum, is the largest in Asia, with a population of one million, which is the size of Amsterdam It has been said that more than half of Bombay's population lives in slums There is a mindless industrialisation across the country, and an attempt to get capital from whatever source, Indian or foreign Industrial ventures are built in ways that not only jeopardise the immediate livelihood of large numbers of people, like the mechanised fishing off the West Coast taking away the livelihood of thousands of fisherman—with no thought of the long-term effects of overfishing—but also endangers permanent resources like soil, air and water

There seems to be an unconscious attempt to replicate the West's earlier industrialisation process, and also to be influenced by the West's current economic thinking which, inevitably, is primarily influenced by its own traditions and current objectives The West's earlier process of industrialisation cannot be replicated here That initial industrial revolution took place in the context of colonial expansion, with a suppression of their own poor, the conquest of vast new territories like the Americas and Australia, the export of its surplus population to colonial territories, the control of the resources of subjugated Asia and Africa, and captive markets, and the export of poverty Deforestation in the colonies and displacement of tribals caused no concern to imperial countries But such policies, now being carried out in India more intensively than in the colonial period, adversely affect our vital interests

Given all these factors, not surprisingly, there are sharp reactions all over the country, ranging from protest movements against alcohol to Naxalite movements in defence of the oppressed, to environmentalist movements against blind and counter-productive development, there are demands for separate States as an answer to ill-considered Central or State policies, and, ultimately for secession If there had been a settled, stable polity, steady growth, law and order, and, most importantly, a sense of popular participation and of responsive government, these moves would have been minimal or non-existent

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INDIA'S record in foreign affairs and defence present a similar scene Ever since the end of the Second World War and India's independence, world affairs have been run by an oligarchy of a small number of nations to suit their own purposes Governments have been made and unmade, pliant dictatorships set up, and a dictatorship in Pakistan supported and encouraged to threaten and attack a democratic India India has not been able to develop the strength or capacity to make a dent on that particular world order

In the immediate aftermath of the War, with the rise of the Cold War, there was an interregnum when a certain room for manoeuvre was available, but India did not recognise the opportunity Non-alignment, as a response to the Cold War, was only a statement that India would take no sides It diverted attention from the real issue, namely, how to make India strong and immune to pressures of whatever kind—economic, military, political, from whatever source

Even at this late stage, we are subject to dictation and threats of sanctions from outside, whether on economic matters, or on defence matters like India's nuclear policy and missile policy or on political affairs like Kashmir The Kashmir problem is itself the result of India's failure to fight the war to a finish in 1947, compounded by the further mistake of taking it to the UN Even in recent years, India has been pleading with the USA to declare Pakistan a terrorist state This abject attitude towards outside powers is an indication of the degree of diffidence with which India handles its vital interests

Whereas in the sixties or even seventies India could have opted for a nuclear defence role, it has by now painted itself into a corner on the issue A nuclear India might have avoided the several debilitating wars it has had with its neighbours A nuclear weapons policy would have given it self-reliant defence at least in one crucial sector All talk of India's self-reliance lacks credibility given its lack of an independent defence technology

India's deliberate and open decision in the fifties to leave the northern border undefended resulted in the Chinese occupation of Aksai Chin, and the attack in the North-East in 1962 After these debacles a defence policy for the northern boundary has been put in place, but it cannot recover Aksai Chin or undo the political damage of 1962 And such defence as we actually have in place is not a credible match for the hostile potential on the other side

The trust and goodwill that India received in the fifties and sixties from newly-free countries have been allowed to lapse, since India did not recognise these intangible items as the foundation for material cooperation in building mutual strength India is now trying to recover lost ground by striving to build bridges with South-East Asia, Africa, and other regions

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A vital element in policy-making, namely, Time, seems never to have been taken into account by India's policy-makers Countries which emerged into freedom later than India, have developed further and faster on all fronts—economic, social and political, and also in international status, than India This is the case with many countries of South-East and East Asia The time lost by not ensuring universal education and economic growth has resulted in an unmanageable and irreversible population Leaving the northern border undefended in the fifties has produced results that cannot be reversed

In the fifty years that India has been free, national institutions, from the government downwards, have lost credibility, and the people's approach to the government is one of cynicism and a lack of faith The instruments of the government—the bureaucracy, the police, the investigation agencies do not command the trust or cooperation of the public Political factors interfere with the delivery of justice The culprits of the holocaust of the Sikhs in 1984 have still not been brought to book City and Municipal administrations are generally sub-standard and inadequate

The public is increasingly turning to the judiciary for redress with public interest litigation as a last resort, taking up issues ranging from municipal garbage to ministerial corruption. Alarmed politicians are making efforts to block this avenue, but it is necessary to remember that if this safety valve of the access to the judiciary is blocked, the people in their despair might take to measures that the political class might not be able to withstand.

Old problems like untouchability and backwardness of various kinds remain, and provide a basis for the creation of vote-banks for our politicians. If at least for the future we have to assert better control over our national situation, credible efforts have to be made to analyse the root causes of our failures.

Both internally and externally some fundamentals of policy-making have been overlooked. These are (a) that on the one hand, policy is an organic whole, though for administrative convenience they might be divided into sectors. Thus national policy requires a total vision of national objectives. Secondly, (b) policy is a question of taking measures that prevent the development of crises, whether populational, educational, internal, external or other, and not a question of waiting for crises to develop and then looking about for remedies.

The organic nature of policy means among other things, that if internally India is economically strong and politically stable, it gains credibility externally and is less likely to be subjected to pressures. It equally means that if universal education is honestly and meaningfully implemented, a new society will automatically grow up. Untouchability will vanish as educated youth moves across the country and into different sectors of the economy, people will become economically more productive and self-reliant, ancient horrors like *sati* and new ones like bride-burning will be eroded with the liberation of women. The growth of education and the economy will undercut the present kind of divisive politics in which political parties bank on the backwardness and poverty of people and their inter-communal rivalries. But the kind of leadership we have under the present dispensation is incapable of comprehension and original thinking, their main concern being their own profit and power. Nothing else would explain India's sub-standard performance over such a long period and on such a broad front.

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As often as one looks at the national scene, one is reminded of Edmund Burke's dictum that great empires and small minds go ill together. This great country, uniquely capable of building a new society internally and internationally, has since independence been the prisoner of unthinking leaders who, at best, copied what the West did in the past rather than devising patterns of governance for the future for an India that is different from and much more complex than any Western model being copied, and at worst, by mindless, even criminal types, who have been sucking the life-blood of this country.

We have more scams and scandals than ever before, and they reach up to higher levels than before. Our textbook economists do not compute the cost to the country, especially the poor, of the bloated governments we have in which heads of governments create huge cabinets in order to win legislative support to keep themselves in power, or of the money paid for the so-called security for our political VIPs, or on their extended tours abroad with large personal retinues, or on the frequent celebrations of various kinds by the political parties, or on mid-term elections, and not merely on the elections but the lack of progress arising from the lack of cogent governance attendant on the instability that leads to mid-term elections.

For half a century all our parties have talked about socialism of various kinds and about the eradication of poverty, and in the end two-thirds of the population is poor in different degrees and one-third is below poverty level. The resulting rivalries for scarce resources and opportunities, give the politicians limitless scope for building vote-banks, and the resulting conflicts.

The record of half a century should convince the people that it is necessary to analyse the factors that have produced these results. The time is past for merely recounting all the things that are wrong. A way has to be found to mobilise the energies and initiative of the people. There has to be decentralisation and convincing accountability. The outsize States that are the playgrounds of political warlords (and ladies) should be broken down. A large number of small States with their own administrative capitals could initiate a large number of growth centres. Several levels of administration with appropriate degrees of autonomy, with a direct election by the electorate of the heads of government at every level would involve people in their own development and create conditions of accountability. It is a basic proposition that people want to develop and improve their condition. Let us give them a chance. ■

(Courtesy: *Politics India*)

IMPROVING INDO-PAK TIES IN GOLDEN JUBILEE YEAR

What Is To Be Done?

SATYAPAL DANG

Pakistan and India won their freedom fifty years ago. The big majority of Hindus and Sikhs then living in Pakistan did not want to migrate to India. Likewise Muslims living in India including those in Punjab wanted to remain where they were. The actual developments, however, took a different turn. Instigated by vested interests, a section of people in each of the two Punjabs went mad. There was massacre of Hindus and Sikhs on one side and of Muslims on the other. Even small children were not spared. Women were dishonoured. Forced migration started. Trainfull of migrants were put to death. Agents of our former rulers felt pleased as this was bound to weaken both India and Pakistan. Thus independence did not bring unmixed joy. The happiness it brought was accompanied by a very great sadness especially in the two Punjabs. Nevertheless, there was another side of the sad picture.

The majority of people on both sides of the border refused to fall prey to the madness engineered by grossly misusing the name of religion. And many out of this majority had the courage to risk their own lives to protect the lives and honour of their brothers and sisters of other communities. My own sisters and mother as also the family of my uncle Parma Nand Dang were then living in Ram Nagar (also called Rasul Nagar) in Gujranwala district in Pakistan. When the communal situation began worsening, all these near and dear relations of mine were taken by some Muslim families living on the backside of our house to their own homes. They were given all possible facilities. They treated our womenfolk as their own sisters and mothers. When they felt at a particular point of time that it would be impossible for them to protect our family members they told them: "If something happens to you our Allah will never forgive us." Our family members too were worried. They realised that their continuing to stay there would put in danger the lives of their hosts too. With the help of some officers in the Army they migrated to Indian Punjab and from there to Delhi and later on to UP and Yamuna Nagar (Haryana). In Amritsar in Indian Punjab in Chowk Prag Das near the Golden Temple, Bibi Pritam Kaur, his son Bawa Ghanashyam Dass and family gave shelter in their big house to more than 100 Muslim families against heavy odds and saved their lives. And these two examples were by no means isolated ones.

When the people of both the countries celebrate the golden jubilee of their independence they need to recall the events which followed August 14-15, 1947. They must pledge not to let the tragedy of 1947 ever take place again in any form. We must remember and pay homage to all those innocent persons who lost their lives just when they should have been dancing with joy in the streets. Let us also recall those brave souls on both sides who risked their own lives to protect the members of the other communities from such of their co-religionists as had forgotten that the true teaching of every religion was brotherhood of mankind. Let us all pledge to follow their footsteps.

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ON more than one occasion it has been proved that on both sides of the border feelings of brotherhood and friendliness persist notwithstanding the generally strained relations even bordering on hostility between the two. In 1955, for instance, at the time of some cricket matches, one had only to apply to the district authorities to get permission to visit India/Pakistan. Thousands availed themselves of the facility from both sides and in each state visitors from the neighbouring country received warm welcome. Some of us went to Lahore on cycles, visited many sites which were our favourite when some of us were studying/living there. I was particularly happy to visit my college, the Government College, Lahore, and the New Hostel where I lived during my days in that college.

We in Amritsar love to hear Punjabi on Pakistan TV and the number of people who see Urdu dramas is very large indeed—perhaps as large as the number of people in Lahore who see Indian films on our TV. Our newspapers carry a good number of news about Pakistan and I believe the Pakistani papers do the same.

There is, of course, a pretty negative side in the relations between the two countries. It augurs well for both of them that the golden jubilee of our independence has come at a time when the governments of the two countries are making serious efforts to overcome hostility and develop close friendly relations.

Poverty, unemployment, large-scale illiteracy, etc are the common problems facing the two countries. The development of friendly relations and the opening up of trade for the benefit of each other will help both a great deal to overcome those problems.

The author, one of the most respected Left leaders of Punjab, is a CPI veteran and an indefatigable crusader against Khalistani terrorism.

How to go about this? How to achieve this? Those are million dollar questions—difficult ones but not insoluble In our opinion

1 The governments of the two countries must pledge never again to go to war against each other
2 The two governments must also pledge not to encourage terrorism on either side of the international border including the Line of Actual Control No hostile activity against the other must be allowed by any of the two from its soil Terrorists of one country operating from the soil of the other must be made to go back to their own country
3 There should be increasing exchange of visits of writers, poets, students, cultural troupes, intellectuals, trade unionists, peasants and others Gradual relaxation of visa restrictions should be negotiated so that visits become more frequent with neither country having the fear of any danger to its security through such visits
4 Both the countries must stop hostile propaganda against each other
5 The agreement reached between the two governments to set up different working groups to deal with various problems and disputed issues is a good one Those groups must work with determination to reach agreements
6 Kashmir, of course, is the most difficult problem between India and Pakistan Without having any feeling of guilt whatsoever, we in India are convinced that Kashmir is an integral and inalienable part of India and it was so willed at the appropriate time by the people of Kashmir themselves At the same time we are conscious that the people of Pakistan too have strong views and regard Kashmir as a disputed area The Simla Agreement provides a good, mutually-acceptable framework for negotiating a settlement It visualises talks regarding Kashmir as well Let not those who do not want India and Pakistan to be friends—be they Indians or Pakistanis—be allowed to succeed in preventing fruitful negotiations under the Simla Agreement Given the political will to settle on both sides, in due course an agreement on Kashmir would be reached To make such an agreement a pre-condition for agreements on other issues will be counter-productive and harmful for both Free and frank discussions about Kashmir between Indians and Pakistanis at various non-official levels will surely contribute towards reaching an agreement sooner or later ■

Random Thoughts

K CHANDRAMOULI

It is time a serial of this sort is started Some incitement is necessary What else but Nikhil's article in *Mainstream* of August 9, 1997 'Gandhi's Lonely Furrow'? May Nikhil inspire a series while we celebrate 50 years of independence without any heart-searching!

Gandhiji did not want partition To him vivisection of the country was vivisection of one's own body and soul Che Guevara's assassination in Bolivia and dismemberment of his arms as show-pieces of having completed the errand and burial of rest of the body intact has been excavated recently The Cuban trauma continued and their hero took 30 years to surface Similarly Great Britain did not want to leave its jewel on its Crown without perpetrating insidiously something that will torment Bharat in the years to come The travails of World War II showed them that 'balance of power' was needed in the world order to follow What best would suit their aim when leaving Bharat as scorched earth? Mountbatten's charm beguiled a Nehru and a Sardar to see the immediacy of partition as a bonanza, and Gandhiji had lived out his life on a spiritual plane and did not want any fruits of his sacrifices as all other men are doing till today Gandhiji would never have claimed he is a Freedom Fighter!

We are all men of clay, mudpots containing the jewel of a core, our conscience, call it God's voice or soul *Terra firma* being the plane of existence to do the penance of *tapas* to find out, while living, the Divinity inside each one of us, what is immediately in front of our nose becomes unimportant as compared to what is good for the country Partition and its aftermath and the festering wounds taunting us both till today are the fall-out of the Divide and Rule policy, not the acknowledgement of the Mussalman as entitled to a share of the Bharatiya land as a previous conqueror Gujral's doctrine and its openness is worth being given a try What has Britain or the USA now to do in the internal policies of India or Pakistan, except keep alive bitterness and play politics? Are our elite Muslims any the less qualified or worse off for having chosen the Hindu Bharat as their Motherland?

Sanity comes by long distance vision, a vision *sans* vicissitudes of day-to-day acrimony or entertainment meant to set up brother against brother A combined Pakistan-India accord will be a bugbear to the UK, the USA and all others around Jinnah was misled and his ego pampered while the men-in-a-hurry in the Hindu Raj wanted only to scramble for positions of power History has to be re-written if it is to be relevant to life, the life of the millions whose surrogates are in power ■

The author a senior Advocate of the Supreme Court of India He was also the Joint Registrar of the Supreme Court (from which post he has retired)

A Retrospect and Prospect for Swaraj of the People

ARJUN SENGUPTA

Fifty years ago at the midnight of the day of our independence, Jawaharlal Nehru gave a speech in the Constituent Assembly which summed up the essence of the tradition of our national struggle for independence He said

> Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom A moment comes which comes but rarely in history, when we step out from the old to the new, when an age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service of India and-her people and to the still larger cause of humanity

Nehru then went on to say what he meant as the service of India

> The service of India means the service of the millions who suffer It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity The ambition of the greatest man of our generation has been to wipe every tear from every eye That may be beyond us, but as long as there are tears and suffering, so long our work will not be over

The reference to "the greatest man of our generation" in that speech was obviously to Mahatma Gandhi Gandhi's vision of India was no doubt very great, but it was not a utopia He believed in realising his dream and he went to great lengths to indicate the practical steps that should be followed to realise them In the same spirit, he had laid down the basic principle to guide our economic policy

> I will give you a Talisman Whenever you are in doubt or the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test Recall the face of the poorest and weakest man you may have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to *Swaraj* for the hungry and spiritually starving millions?

Swaraj as Expansion of Capabilities

FROM the very beginning of our era of independence, our national leaders identified the removal of poverty as the first priority of our national objectives They had, following the precepts of Gandhi, identified *Swaraj* or national independence with the *Swaraj* of the millions of poor people which meant that they could have the freedom to lead their own life in a manner they thought best for themselves The lack of *Swaraj* in that sense went beyond the concept of income-poverty, to include the concept of the lack of capabilities, that is, lack of education and skills, health and nutrition or physical and financial assets, all of which are essentially required for any individual to lead a full life The poverty of income or purchasing power is just one element of the lack of such capabilities It is true that if there is an adequate growth of income of purchasing power, it is easier to meet the other requirements for improving the capabilities However, there is no one-to-one relationship between them It is possible to have a reasonably high growth of per capita income in a country, while other indicators of social progress, improving human capabilities may remain stagnant or change at a very slow pace

The author, an eminent economist and a former Ambassador, had functioned for sometime as the Member-Secretary of the Planning Commission He is now one of the Commission's Members

The current literature on economic development has highlighted this lack of relationship between income growth and the improvement in the indicators of education, skill formation, health, nutrition or life expectancy—all of which would be regarded as different facades of human development For several countries, if the variables are traced over a long enough period, one could establish a relationship the other way round, that is, the pace of improvement of the indicators of human development influences the rate of growth of income with a lag of a few years It is as if the indicators of human development are also indicators of human capital formation and raising provisions for them is like increasing the rate of investment, ensuring higher rate of growth for the country over the long run What is even more striking is that this long run need not be very long The effects of improvements in human development indicators are often felt on the growth of income within two to three years

It is not very difficult to explain why this happens, especially in developing countries where even a small improvement in education or skills, in health or nutrition can raise very significantly the productivity of labour What is difficult to explain is why in spite of this, very few countries in the developing world have made adequate provisions for raising investment in human development If such provisions are not made, as a part of public expenditure of the governments of the developing countries, there is not a great prospect that the private sector would provide for them This is an area where markets fail to capture in the private rates of return the social benefits that result from investment in human development Because of such market failure, the government has to play the role of major investors in these areas, and if the government does not play that role, their development will invariably be lagging behind

Indicators of Human Development

THE record of India in this respect should be examined very carefully It is true that India's performance in human development compares rather poorly with several other developing countries, especially in the South-East Asian region, in spite of the importance that was given to them by the leaders of India's national movement There may be many reasons for this, all of which could not be regarded as failures of policies or their implementation The initial conditions have been quite different and India had started with very poor records, *as a legacy of the colonial past,* regarding most of the human development indicators, compared to most of the other developing countries Compulsions of other demands, for political and security reasons, claimed much larger share of India's resources, whether they were for defence or for maintaining law and order in a diverse, multi-ethnic and multi-community nation

India has always been practically the only country in the developing world which maintained the record of a democratic system of government which necessarily meant deployment of resources to meet the populist demands and also meeting the requirements of maintaining the unity and political stability of the country These, of course, do not justify India's poor performance and given the great heritage of our national movement, we should have done much better with respect to human development if we followed the right policy from the beginning But these do suggest the need for examining India's record of performance over time comparing it with itself—how India started and what India achieved over all these years We must not forget that India started with a huge population of about 361 million in 1951 which has increased to more than 900 million by the mid-1990s Expanding the provision and social services even to maintain the status quo would have required tremendous efforts and mobilisation and deployment of substantial resources The sheer size of the problem for a country like India is mind boggling, which cannot be easily comprehended by comparing it with much smaller countries in South-East Asia

Nowhere this difficulty of assessing India's records become as glaring as India's performance in the reduction of poverty There is no doubt that the fact that even in 1993-94 more than a third of India's population live below the poverty line is a matter of great shame, which cannot be covered up by changing the methods of estimation The Planning Commission has accepted the Expert Group's estimation of poverty as an appropriate benchmark and the numbers of the poor according to these estimates turn out to be much higher than that given by the earlier official methods Even according to the Expert Group, the proportion of the population living below the poverty line in 1973-74 was 54 9 per cent, which came down to about 35 9 per cent by 1993-94 However, the total size of the population increased by 68 per cent in these twenty years As a result, the total number of people actually living below the poverty line remained around 320 million in both 1973-74 and 1993-94 This statistics fails to bring out the fact that a very large number of people were actually brought up above the poverty line during this period Had the poverty ratio in 1993-94 remained the same as in 1973-74 and if the population in the different expenditure groups grew at the same rate, the number of people that came out of poverty would be estimated at more than 168 million The actual number would probably be higher, nearly 200 million, because the growth of population among the poor was much higher than among the rich

In terms of several other indicators of human development, India's performance does not appear to be that unimpressive Life expectancy in the 1950s was around 41, which increased in the 1990s to around 61 Infant mortality which was around 146 per one thousand in the 1950s came down in the 1990s to about 75 Literacy rate was only 16 7 per cent in 1951 and it went up to 52 2 per cent in 1991 Primary school enrolment ratio of children in the age group of 6-11 was 62 4 per cent in 1960-61, it has increased to 104 per cent in 1995-96 The under-five mortality rate came down by 50 per cent between 1960 and 1990 and immunisation among the one-year olds, which was less than 20 per cent in the 1970s, went up to more than 92 per cent in the 1990s More interestingly, the GDP per capita in India, when measured in terms of the 1987 US dollar, increased from 206 in 1960 to 407 in 1994 But measured in terms of the purchasing power parity (calculated by the World Bank and the UNDP), it increased from $617 in 1960 to $1348 in 1994

In spite of all these achievements, which should be complemented with many impressive achievements in other fields, such as foodgrains and cereal production, agricultural productivity, growth and diversification of the structure of industrial production, development of skills and infrastructure facilities, modernising many areas of our economic activities, it must be emphasised that the progress in the social fields has remained far short of our requirements The dreams of our national leaders have remained, in a large measure, unrealised For the overwhelming majority of our population, *Swaraj*, or standing on their own feet to lead their own life, is still far beyond their reach This has been the case, in spite of the fact that there was national consensus all along about what Gandhi had said for wiping the tears of every Indian and what Nehru had pledged for at the dawn of our independence

Why Have We Lagged Behind?

It is necessary for us to understand why it has not been possible for this consensus about our national objectives to be translated into reality, and why we have lagged behind many other developing countries If we have to find an answer to this, we have to analyse the political economy of our development process In the following paragraphs, I wish to suggest some broad outlines for an approach towards understanding this problem The success of any economic policy depends as much on the appropriate design of the policy, depending upon the constraints of the real world situations, as on the political economy of resolving the conflicts of different interest groups I do not have the full answer to all these questions but I believe that substantial research has to be done to examine carefully the nature of the conflicts of interests involved and the programme designs

In the initial years of our planning, the human development programmes were designed not quite as an integral part of the core of our planning, which consisted mainly of agricultural, industrial and infrastructural development Substantial expenditures were provided for the areas such as education, nutrition, family planning and community development but running somewhat parallel to the investment programmes for the main productive sectors The effects on poverty alleviation and employment generation were to be derived mainly from the overall growth of the productive sectors The expenditures in the social sectors were only to complement them The Mahalanobis model of planning rationalised the investment allocation in different productive sectors maintaining their supply and demand consistencies with a view to accelerating the rate of growth of GDP The question of providing employment to the vast masses of under-employed and unemployed labour in the country, which could not be absorbed in the growth of the productive sectors, were expected to be covered by the growth of cottage and rural industries, organised in cooperative and community development centres The implicit assumption in all these exercises was that poverty alleviation would result from the overall growth of GDP and expansion of employment associated with industrialisation As the full effect of accelerated growth of the productive sectors would be felt only over the long run, provisions were made to execute supporting programmes of small-scale cottage and rural industrial development, supplying the mass requirements of consumer goods

This approach started changing from about the late 1960s and early 1970s, as this "trickle down" effect on poverty alleviation and expenditures on social development were extremely inadequate with an unexpectedly slow process of development Gradually, poverty alleviation evolved as a core objective of our Plan, when the Fifth and the Sixth Plan talked about targets of development, in terms of specifying proportions of our population being supplied with the minimum needs, allowing them to rise above the poverty line Even in these models, however, the bulk of the employment generation and removal of income poverty was associated with the rates of sectoral development Side by side, special programmes to promote rural development and to carry out integrated anti-poverty schemes were launched throughout the country In the subsequent years of our planning, the sizes of these programmes expanded with provisions for rural employment generation scheme and a plethora of social development programmes They covered primary education, health, nutrition, women and child development, family planning and social infrastructure

Even in the Seventh and the Eighth Plans, where substantial provisions were made for social development expenditures, those programmes did not become the centre of our planning The financial requirements of the productive sectors, especially infrastructural and industrial development, were to be met first The expenditures on the social programmes were to be financed mainly from the residual resources, that is, those that were left over after meeting the claim on resources from the productive sectors The sizes of the resources were not unlimited and for Five-Year Plans they were constrained by the projections of overall domestic savings and inflow of foreign savings If in actual practice, the availability of resources turned out to be less than what was projected at the beginning of the Plan, more often than not, social development expenditures were cut to meet the supply demand balances of resources In many of the social development sectors, there were not enough provisions even to meet the maintenance requirements and paucity of funds together with the uncertainty about their disbursement made it very difficult to plan for any of these schemes systematically and consistently for a long enough period

Social Development to be the Core of our Planning

This problem of designing the programmes of development can be resolved if the approach in our planning changes towards making social and human development as the core of our planning process, giving them the first priority in our investment allocation There would, of course, be the need for a substantial increase in investment in infrastructure but they would be determined from the need to supply the infrastructure services to an adequate extent to sustain a structure of productive activities and the flow of resources that support a high rate of social development

What would be necessary is to make investment in the social sectors and expenditures for poverty alleviations as "parameters" of the system, having the first claim on the total resources available in the country It is the residual resources that would go to the other productive sectors with infrastructure having a dominance over other areas for absorbing public savings and expenditures We may even like to give up the idea of comprehensive planning, leaving bulk of the productive sectors to be governed by the market forces and subjected to private sector investments, both domestic and foreign, guided mainly by the pulls and pushes of the markets

Public expenditures then may be concentrated almost entirely to social sector programmes and possibly for infrastructure projects in some areas where their supply would be in the nature of public goods or subjected to large externalities The total size of the plan then might turn out to be much smaller than what we have provided for in our Ninth Plan but would be most effectively utilised with full financing of the programmes and a reasonable degree of certainty of disbursements over a period of time

Implementation of Programmes

Side by side with this change in designing the programme, it would be necessary to improve upon the methods of delivering or implementation of the programmes We have a tendency to judge the performance of different social and human development programmes by the amount of financial resources devoted to them This is not the way planning should be done in a resource-short economy, where expenditures must satisfy certain norms and where there is no scope for laxity in the financial resources The determination of such norms would invariably depend upon the system of delivery or the methods of implementation There has to be adequate monitoring of the disbursement of finance and their effects and all these have to be done at the grassroots level by the people who are the actual beneficiaries and who would make sure of making appropriate adjustments to fit the different elements of the programmes into their exact framework of requirements

In other words, effective implementation of the social and human development programmes has to be linked to the decentralisation of the whole planning process The choice of the programmes, the methods of implementing them and the procedures of monitoring and evaluation must be the responsibility of the grassroots organisations Planning has to be from below in order to be successfully implemented

Interactions of Interest Groups

It is at the stage of the implementation of the programmes that issues of political economy come to the forefront, because it is those issues which are crucial for their success A government functions in any real world situation through the interaction of the interest groups at any point of time There would be some coalition of interest groups which would dominate the functioning of the government, both in the choice of the areas of operation as well as in the actual methods of operation The government machinery, its bureaucracy and all levels of functionaries, ally themselves with those dominant interest groups They try to capture and share among themselves the benefits accruing from the government actions When those actions take the form of regulations and restrictions on the operations of the market forces, they enlarge the scope of the operations of the black economy As a result, enormous rents or windfall profits are generated The bureaucracy in alliance with the dominant interest groups very soon develop an interest in perpetuating these government interventions, irrespective of their ultimate effects on the achievements of the broad objectives of the government policies

In India, most of the government policies for development took the form of interventions in the markets restricting the normal operation of market forces Initially, the objectives were to intervene where there were market failures and guide the economic agents to operate in such a manner as to achieve the broad national and social objectives But very soon the alliances between the government functionaries and the dominant interest groups in capturing and sharing the enormous rent, create such a vested interest that achieving the objectives of the policies became secondary to perpetuating the policies creating the distortions

It is also important to note that it was possible for such a state of affairs to continue for a long time in a democratic system like India, because the benefits from the social development programmes were usually spread thinly over a very large section of the population, and the interest groups who benefited from these programmes were very broadly dispersed They could seldom coalesce among themselves into a strong enough combine of interest groups to control the functioning of the machinery of the government

In other words, the masses of the population who were to benefit from these social programmes could not be mobilised into formations that could exercise sufficient power to influence the day-to-day operations of the government As a result, it was the large farmers and the landlords, the upper caste groups in the social hierarchy and the trading interest, which became dominant groups in the rural areas, capturing most of the benefits directly or indirectly from the expenditures on the social development programmes They diverted and misused the resources at the ground, leaving small residuals to benefit the teeming millions whom these social expenditures were primarily meant to benefit

The story was the same in the urban areas, with their own formation of coalition of dominant interest groups at the expense of the intended beneficiaries of the programmes

Although the teeming millions of the poor and the deprived and the socially under-privileged could not form themselves into dominant interest groups, they still had and continue to have one leverage of power in our democratic institutions, which is their voting strength This has a strong point in the history of Indian development, which has kept poverty alleviation and social development as an objective of development policy for practically all the political parties in India It was Mrs Indira Gandhi who first used this leverage of power to effectively neutralise her political adversaries through her *garibi hatao* programme When she found herself cornered by her political opponents, who represented different layers of dominant interest groups and who formed coalitions among themselves to keep her out of power, Mrs Gandhi decided to ally herself demonstrably, going above all these interest groups, directly to the masses of the Indian poor and the under-privileged She became an almost invincibly powerful political leader because of the mass base of her appeal However, although it had allowed her to capture power over the dominant interest groups, in the day-to-day functioning of her government she could not overcome their pressures As a result, her social programmes could only be of partial success

Mrs Gandhi was very conscious that the public perspective of her image as the champion of the poor must be supported by the delivery of the pro-poor programmes It was during her time, as mentioned above, in the design of the Five Year Plans, poverty eradication became integrated with the investment programmes It was also during her time, particularly during her second period of Prime Ministership that she initiated the process of deregulation and liberalisation of the markets to neutralise the forces responsible for the creation of rents that the dominant interest groups were seeking to capture for their own benefits

This process of liberalisation was continued during the period of Rajiv Gandhi and after the 1991 economic reforms, it gathered a momentum that may not be possible to stop any more

However, it must be understood that the economic reforms promoting free operation of the market forces create their own coalition of dominant interest groups If the government does not follow a deliberate policy for social development and poverty alleviation, the groups that would benefit from them, even if they are the overwhelming majority of population would remain outside the fulcrum of power and, therefore, neglected and lagging behind

What is more important is that over the last quarter of the century, the poor masses have become politically conscious and if the pro-poor perception of a political organisation is not backed by concrete measures of pro-poor policies, demonstrably benefiting them, the poor could exercise their voting power to throw them out of power It is possible to have great success in implementing economic reforms and increase the rate of growth of GDP for industrial production and also be flooded with flows of foreign investment But if the popular perception is that these methods are benefiting only a small section of the richer people, with the vast masses of the poor and under-privileged being bypassed if not adversely affected, the verdict of the elections may go quite definitely against the party in power

Conditions of Success

If this understanding of the process of implementation of the policies, their successes and failures, in a democratic country like India is correct, there are two conditions which have to be satisfied for the success of the pro-poor social development policies in India First, they have to be designed properly so that they are cost effective, minimising the possibilities of wastage They should be delivered at the local levels to the beneficiaries by mechanisms over which the beneficiaries have reasonable control and they should be consistent with other policies which are concerned with the development activities in the region and which also affect the conditions of overall macro-economic stability in the country If a programme is not cost effective it cannot be sustained and more often than not such a programme is given up either half way or for poor maintenance and recurring expenditure Similarly, all programmes have to be adjusted to suit the local conditions that vary from State to State and from region to region and unless the beneficiaries of the programmes have some role in the monitoring, if not in formulating the programmes, an authority sitting at a distance from the site of the implementation of the programme cannot hope to be efficient in making the necessary changes Similarly, no programmes can be conceived in isolation from other programmes as well as the general policies that affect the rate of inflation, the interest rates, the rate of savings and other macroeconomic variables

The second condition to be satisfied is that the beneficiaries of the programmes must be able to have enough political clout not only to prevent any dilution or abandoning or misuse of the programmes but also to penalise the functionaries responsible for them In addition, these groups collectively would have to be sufficiently strong as to force the government in power to provide the required financing of these programmes as priority claims on the total resources of the country

From this point of view, a highly beneficial development has taken place in India in the last few years This is the widespread development of the Panchayati Raj system The Constitution has been amended to ensure that regular elections to Panchayats take place, which give the local population at the grassroots level the power to change the governance of their Panchayats If the Panchayats are held responsible for implementing most of the social development programmes at the grassroots level, this would go a long way to ensure that the local population, the beneficiaries of the social development programmes, will be vigilantly watching the formulation and implementation of the programmes

It is possible that in the beginning, for some time, that the dominant groups in the districts or blocs or villages would control the local Panchayats But one thing we all have learnt from the Indian experience of democracy is that once the people become conscious of their rights and implications of their voting power, they do exercise that power decisively and effectively against the ruling groups if they fail to satisfy their perceived interests

I am sure that this will also happen in the case of Panchayats and that over time the local people in electing their *Sarpanchs* or Panchayat functionaries will take into account their effectiveness in carrying out the development programmes Nothing can be a greater guarantee than this popular consciousness for the effective implementation of the social development programmes If the authority for their planning, designing and implementing are passed on to the Panchayats, together with the finances allocated for those programmes, it would radically change our performance in human development

The Panchayati Raj has the potential of bringing *Swaraj* to the doorsteps of the people at the grassroots level If the new policy framework of the country where social development is expected to occupy the core of the national development has to work, it is the Panchayati Raj system which must take over these programmes within, of course, a framework of regional national development planning ■

(Courtesy *Journal of Peace and Gandhian Studies*)

Fifty Years of Indian Independence

KRIPA SHANKAR

The country faced Herculean tasks when it attained freedom Colonial rule had resulted in allround decay and destruction and the task was to rebuild the country and make up the leeway in a steady manner The British had introduced Western type of feudalism with all its dire consequences This had resulted in vast pauperisation of the peasantry, concentration of land, landlessness and decay of agriculture The destruction of cottage industries, particularly handlooms, had disturbed the balance of rural economy and the vast surplus population was to be gainfully employed The British had also destroyed the village community organisation which was the mainstay of her ancient civilisation and had survived all the ravages of history They had introduced a highly centralised bureaucracy in its place which was alienated from the people and represented the terror of the British might

The dismantling of this colonial structure was the precondition for any beginning of the process of resurrection of the country The new ruling class in India was, in a way, the product of colonial rule The landed aristocracy was a formidable ally of the colonial masters The commercial bourgeoisie that came up was also closely allied with this section The nascent industrial bourgeoisie too had grown out of the commercial one and was closely allied with the imperialist one as it heavily depended on them The English-educated middle class which spearheaded the freedom struggle was also a part of the elite The ruling elite consisted of the privileged sections of the society and though they had opposed foreign rule they did not stand for any radical transformation as it would harm their class interests This explains why the ruling elite in India betrayed the people who entertained high hopes because of the charismatic qualities of leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru as well as the hero worship ethos of the people

Let us begin with the land issue Zamindari was no doubt abolished which was a highly welcome event but as the land concentration was left intact, the post-zamindari pattern of land ownership was no different from the earlier one Land remained highly concentrated—the top one per cent owning as much land as the bottom three-fourths of the rural households Subsequent land ceiling measures did not mean any difference as not even two per cent of the land was proposed to be distributed This in most of the cases remained on paper because of the powerful clout of the landed aristocracy Gram Samaj land was distributed more extensively as it did not face the ire of the large landowners to that extent Ceiling laws have the positive effect that further concentration of land has been checked but the huge concentration itself has not been broken with the result that the benefits of public investment have largely accrued to the large landowners who have further entrenched themselves in the rural economy The phenomenon of green revolution has thrown up a middle caste in the countryside which has only become a part of the ruling elite, making the process of radical rural transformation all the more difficult The rural oligarchy is opposed to any empowerment of the people below, it will stifle any move for improvement in the condition of the poo as it is the general poverty in the rural areas tha has provided them with a dominant position anc control over labour supply It is in their interest tha the rural poor does not get any alternative employ ment so as to be wholly dependent on them Henc their reactionary role and any attempt for rura transformation will founder because of thei antagonism

The growth in agricultural production can als not be sustained in a highly inegalitarian structu as the large landowners have little interest i making investment beyond a certain point This corroborated by the fact that rural savings are no being siphoned off to the urban areas as the cred deposit ratio of the rural banks is hardly 50 per cer that is, half of the saving is drained out becau those who are in a position to make investments a not inclined to do so And the vast majority has savings of its own to do so This affects agricultu growth as well Agricultural growth was sustain initially by public investment Private investme also crowded in following public investment N the overall investment rate has declined, so is t

The author is the Director, Arthik Anusandhan Kendra, Allahabad case with foodgrains production which currently is growing at less than two per cent—lower than the population growth rate for the first time The *Economic Survey 1996-97* has noted

> The annual compound rate of foodgrains production for the past six years between 1990-91 and 1996-97 at 1 7 per cent is lower than the annual population growth of 1 9 per cent for the nineties and, therefore, a matter of serious concern (p 155)

Per capita availability of foodgrains is stagnating and if the same falls poverty will get accentuated

The ruling elite had no vision of a new India nor could it inspire the people as it was a status quoist coalition It heavily relied on the colonial bureaucracy which has further strengthened as a bulwark against the rising expectations of the people The village communities were not to be resuscitated as the base for a participatory democracy No power or finance was devolved to them though on paper the village panchayats existed Even where village people were to be directly affected, no association of the community or their participation and involvement was to be solicited Rural development and rural reconstruction were envisaged through a, developmental bureaucracy which was only a part of the administrative one, equally alienated from the people A career-oriented bureaucracy which had nothing in common with the people whom they were supposed to serve descended on the rural scene and it was soon found that this tribe specialised only in paperwork while funds would go elsewhere The late Rajiv Gandhi was never tired of saying that hardly 15 paise out of a rupee meant for the rural poor reach them

Had village communities really been resuscitated with genuine devolution of power and finances, ural India, despite its many hangovers of the dead ast, would have pulsated with a new life as the eople would be managing their affairs collectively The spirit of the freedom struggle would have been evived for the building of a new India Gandhiji ad fought for *Gram Swaraj* which envisaged the uster of the bureaucracy and an eventual self-rule y the community leading to a process of withering way of the state so as to herald a higher stage of ivilisation The ruling elite simply could not ountenance it Consequently what we find is that here is total apathy and even cynicism on the part f the people as they find themselves redundant in e given set-up

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HE process can be reversed if the village community organisation is restored to its pristine glory where they will have the power to rebuild and rejuvenate the rural economy The vast manpower which, in a way, is our biggest resource is not fully utilised because the village community has no power to plan locally and no resources to finance it Despite the very adverse land-man ratio in the country more than four per cent of the land is completely unutilised Two-thirds of the agricultural land is degraded and requires soil conservation measures The forest cover is dwindling One-third of the water resources is wasted as there are no schemes to conserve the rain water in the villages through construction of check dams, bundhs and other water harvesting structures The run-off water not only removes the nutrients from the top soil but it also causes floods whose fury is increasing every year Conservation of soil and water alongwith afforestation alone can provide job to many million persons within the rural areas on a permanent basis The Citizens' Report has estimated that afforestation and plantation of trees on all degraded and unutilised land alone can absorb all the surplus rural population

The government annually spends Rs 9000 crores on rural development but the same has almost become infructuous thanks to.the total bureaucratic control over it If the same amount is put with the village community where everyone is associated with the given activity and not monopolised by the village Pradhan as happened in the case of the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, the picture would be different And this amount can be raised many-fold if more resources are mobilised from the richer sections The White Paper has estimated that the annual subsidy enjoyed by the non-poor is Rs 1,85,000 crores The question is whether it is more essential to give this much of subsidy to the non-poor or divert the same to creating employment for the poorest Annually seven crore persons can be employed on the rural works mentioned above with the same amount at the rate of Rs 2000 per month per person Even if the subsidies are halved 3 5 crore persons can find gainful employment Then poverty and unemployment will become a thing of the past But the question is who controls the state and in whose favour policies are formulated? The rich in India who control the state are not concerned about the poverty or backwardness of the country They are out to expand their power and pelf knowing no restraint or prudence India has one of the lowest tax-GDP ratio as well as direct tax ratio to GDP The income tax rate on the highest income slab is 30 per cent while it is above 50 per cent in most of the developed countries of the world According to the IMF, Indians have stashed away 100 billion dollars in foreign banks Black money worth more than Rs 1,00,000 crores is being generated every year through avoidance and evasion of taxes There are 148 exemptions for income tax payers Though a poor country India has the highest reserve of gold and is the largest importer of gold amounting to 600 tonnes every year as the rich hoard their wealth in the shape of gold and jewellery

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SINCE the rich cannot be taxed as they should be, the burden of financing government expenditure falls on the common man through indirect taxes and deficit financing which is inflationary and hurts the poor The resources so mobilised at the cost of the poor are not productively utilised in investments in agriculture, industry, infrastructure and the like The expense on administrative heads is the fastest growing item of expenditure It is worth noting that currently the Central and State Governments spend nearly the same on police as they do on agriculture and allied activities which supports nearly seventy per cent of the population. In 1997-98 in the Central Budget Rs 3956 crores has been provided for the police but only Rs 3785 crores for agriculture, cooperation and allied activities (*Budget Papers 1997-98*) During 1995-96 (BE) all the State Governments put together spent Rs 7474 crores on police while their total expenditure on administrative services was Rs 16,034 crores Expenditure on agriculture and allied activities was Rs 9915 crores (vide *RBI Bulletin* December 1995, p 1236) The inordinate growth in non-developmental expenditure has left little for Plan investments The per capita Plan outlay on agriculture and allied activities during 1996-97 has been Rs 30 only and on rural development the same has been Rs 56, the overall Plan outlay being Rs 916 It is not so much the meagreness of the amount as its inefficient use that has resulted in low growth

As enough surpluses were not being generated from the investments made, the government has followed the easy course of recourse to borrowings to finance its expenditure But borrowing has its cost The interest is to be paid, so also the principal Currently the annual interest burden of the Central Government alone is Rs 68,000 crores which the government manages from fresh borrowings The Central Government's total debt now amounts to Rs 4,24,683 crores which comes to 30 per cent of the GDP The total liabilities at Rs 7,34,221 form more than half of the GDP

The borrowing syndrome can no longer be sustained and now foreign capital is being cajoled to fill the gap But it too has its cost and has to be serviced Payment on account of foreign investment has risen from Rs 7393 crores in 1990-91 to Rs 11,497 crores in 1993-94 (*Economic Survey 1996-97*, p S-74) The negative balance of payments has risen from 1278 million dollars in 1990-91 to 2919 million dollars in 1995-96 (*Ibid*, p 85) The picture would have been much worse had there been no influx of foreign investments from 102 million dollars to 4143 million dollars during the same period There has been little improvement in the real economy and none of the problems of inadequate investment and, more importantly, the inefficiency of such investments has been tackled

The picture today is that India ranks 138th out of 175 nations in term of the human development index It has half the world's poor and illiterate persons It has the highest stock of undernourished children, child labourers, and children out of school It has the highest number of blind and TB patients and has one of the lowest doctor-population ratios Its cities are found to be one of the dirtiest and recently it has been declared to be a noteworthy figure among the most corrupt countries ■

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BLUE PENCIL

From Pages printed Fifty Years Ago

G S BHARGAVA

The golden jubilee of our independence is rightly the occasion to look back on the last fifty years with pardonable pride but also with our eyes open to what has gone wrong, when and how The media, including the satellite TV channels, cannot be faulted for niggardliness in the matter In fact, they have been doling out sackfuls of fact and fiction One wonders how much of it can be even glanced at by the average reader

That apart, what is more useful, especially for the younger generation, is a faithful flashback on the events as they were reported by the newspapers In this perspective, the reproduction by *The Tribune,* followed by *The Statesman,* of the front pages of their newspapers dated fifty years earlier is interesting Many of us have had no chance to read or even see them earlier and so it was news also

For instance, a seven-column headline on the front page of *The Tribune* dated August 12, 1947 (published, incidentally, from Lahore) said the Congress was not happy with the Radcliff award on boundary demarcation between India and Pakistan and would seek review of it Bhat's cartoon on the subject, reproduced by the *Free Press Journal,* was also on the same lines which showed nationalist reaction to the award They should serve as a sufficient rebuttal of Lamb's tale—as B G Verghese aptly called Alistair Lamb's concoction that Lord Mountbatten had influenced Radcliff into including Gurdaspur district in India, thus making the Kashmir Valley accessible by road Any number of American and other scholars have found it a handy peg to hang their advocacy of Pakistan's case on Kashmir After all, Lamb also was a historian

An equally newsy but uncontroversial bit was that Kiran Shankar Roy, who was the Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee President during the tumultuous months about a decade earlier of Netaji Bose's fight with Gandhiji and the Congress 'high command' and his ultimate expulsion from the party, was elected leader of the Congress party in the Pakistan Constituent Assembly, meeting in Karachi then Both *The Tribune* and *The Statesman* of the day, rightly, featured prominently on their front pages M A Jinnah's statement in the Pakistan Constituent Assembly, after having been unanimously elected its President, that the minorities, mainly Hindus, would be equal citizens of Pakistan and entitled to all citizenship rights including the right to practise their religion Roy, as leader of the Congress party and thus the *de facto* leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, welcomed Jinnah's declaration of policy and congratulated him on it He also said 'We accept citizenship of Pakistan with all its implications' He then assured Jinnah of the loyalty of the Congress and its members to Pakistan, even if they had been hitherto against partition of the country

The Statesman report had the additional information that Bhim Sen Sachar was elected deputy leader of the Congress party in the Consembly and that Prime Minister Gujral's father, Avtar Narain Gujral, was the chief whip, although it mis-spelt both their names A Calcutta report of the United Press of India—also on the front page of *The Tribune*—said Gandhiji was thinking of undertaking a fast unto death against communal violence He was then in Calcutta Finally, the newspaper reproduced a cartoon by George Whitelaw in the *Daily Herald* of London on the transfer of power to India It showed the 'handing over of the torch of freedom' to infant India with the title 'Carry on'

By the way, *The Statesman,* like the rest of the Anglo-Indian Press, as *The Times of India,* the *Civil and Military Gazette* and *The Pioneer* were collectively called, revelled in addressing Gandhiji as Mr Gandhi, instead of Mahatma Gandhi or even Gandhi simply But as its Calcutta report showed, there was recognition of his uniqueness when it mentioned his anguish and even anger at the Bihar killings of Muslims

◆

MEANWHILE, reverting to the present, this year's D T Lakdawala Memorial Lecture, sponsored by the Planning Commission and organised by the Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi, was delivered by Professor Muhammad Yunus, founder-Managing Director of the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh Professor Yunus has become a legend in his lifetime for his concept of banking without collateral for the poorest of the poor, or *Daridranarayan* as Gandhiji called them reverentially He put his concept into practice by establishing in 1983 the Grameen Bank which now provides credit to two million people spread over 36,600 of the 68,000 Bangladesh villages It has crossed the US $ 2 billion mark in cumulative loans, which are income-generating by being money lent for house building and for lease of equipment and animals The bulk of 94 per cent of the borrowers are women and the repayment rate has been 98 per cent

Professor Yunus, in his address, frowned on the idea of poverty alleviation through handouts and subsidies, saying that the only way 'to end poverty is to create employment' He has demonstrated that 'capital linked to work eliminates poverty fast with a minimum or no cost at all to the tax-payer and gives the poor control over their lives' He has contrasted self-employment with creation of jobs for its own sake as part of an anti-poverty programme "The idea of a young person working hard to make himself/herself useful to an employer appears very repulsive to me," he declared, likening it to decking up a young girl to attract a husband His emphasis is, therefore, on self-employment and development of the innate traditional skills of the people to be followed by training later on, if necessary In short, it is an outstanding lecture, replete with original, revolutionary, ideas

Finance Minister, P Chidambaram, who presided over the function, drew attention to the fact there was no subsidy or waiver in Muhammad Yunus's path-breaking achievement It showed that the poor did not need subsidies or loan *melas* but needed the wherewithal to fashion their lives One would have expected the newspapers to find space for such views backed by accomplishment, at least to set off discussion on his opinions It was more so because not many MPs were present at the meeting But no

Besides those newspapers habitually insensitive to non-political topics of social significance—I don't have to name them because they make no secret of their primacy as purveyors of contractors' favourite reading—very few others also reported the event, if at all Not even the satellite TV channels which have been making a song and dance of Arun Shourie's pro-forma venom against Dr Ambedkar, for instance

Mulgaokar used to say that 'covering' events like the recent Calcutta session of the All-India Congress Committee should be more for 'smelling' the atmosphere and gathering background information than for reporting the proceedings The agencies do it as reliably as any 'special correspondent' of a newspaper and more copiously Why then do newspapers with miniature bureaux in Calcutta send two or more heavy-weights from Delhi for them? Primarily, it is an opportunity for those on the Congress beat to have an outing and improve their standing with the leaders of the party Against this background, *The Deccan Chronicle* story of the participants in the Congress sessions swooping on *rosogollas* is a scoop of sorts, even if not extraordinary What is most interesting about the story is the quote from a Congress activist that they "enjoyed *rosogolla* more than the AICC plenary session" the hype about which was that Sonia Gandhi's presence and eloquence had 'electrified' the gathering

◆

Political reporting has been the strong suit of Indian journalists That the nationalist newspapers in the country had been the second string of the freedom movement in the pre-independence days, particularly in the hectic decades of the Gandhian era, might have been responsible for it The basic difference in those days between the Indian-owned newspapers and the Anglo-Indian Press, as *The Times of India, The Statesman,* the *Civil and Military Gazette,* the Madras *Mail* and *The Pioneer* were collectively called, was the 'obsession' with politics of the nationalist dailies whereas the latter paid attention to other departments like sports, commerce, etc

Over the years, however, the newspapers, including language publications, have got over the shortcoming with a vengeance, so to say *The Hindu,* seen as a sedate, old-world relic, had perhaps the best sports pages among all newspapers not very long ago, its management also published a sports weekly The *Malayala Manorama* had carried on its front page colour photographs of New Delhi Asiad events The *Deccan Herald* has at least one colour picture of a sports event every day Similarly, economics and commerce or business have become important departments of Indian journalism, in which the country can boast of some of the best talent This has been without detriment to the quality of our political reporting When persons of my generation entered the profession in the 1940s our effort was to play the sedulous ape to Mulgaokar, Prem Bhatia, Pran Chopra or Nikhil-*da,* whose political writing was scintillating

The purpose of this build-up is to bring out my sense of disappointment at the handling of the golden jubilee celebrations—the non-ceremonial aspect—by most newspapers Where has all the talent gone? Has it expended itself on the Kanshi Rams, the Mayawatis, the Mulayam Singhs, the Sitaram Kesris, the Sonias, the Surjeets, the Gowdas, and a whole lot of other worthies whose small-mindedness in word and deed fills the front pages day after day? Wasn't the golden jubilee of our independence a fit occasion for top-bracket correspondents to get into the act?

◆

Let me illustrate As far as I can remember there has not been in recent years such a cogently evolved and precisely worded Presidential address as that delivered this year It is not scripted by a professional scribe nor prepared by the government, as the *Andhra Pradesh Times* wrongly assumed in its editorial It bears the unmistakable imprint of Dr K R Narayanan's thought and style How many newspaper reports have brought out its flavour, instead of mechanically reporting it? None, I am afraid There was not even an 'atmosphere piece' in most newspapers while one metropolitan daily thought it necessary to frontpage its correspondent's grouse against 'excessive' security The BBC bags the cake with its Hindi expert saying that the Prime Minister's Hindi translation of the President's address was a repetition of the former! True, it was delivered at the midnight hour even if advance copies were available and what BBC's Nik Gowing calls 'the tyranny of real time' was a hurdle to analytical writing on the subject But it could have been done on the following day, even two days later

The same was the case with the Prime Minister's speech from the ramparts of the Red Fort the next morning As *The Hindustan Times* report promisingly began, it 'set the agenda for the nation' which no newspaper, including *The Hindustan Times,* highlighted adequately It has been the practice for the past Prime Ministers to use the occasion for routine delivery of pious platitudes (Deve Gowda) coupled with philippics against Pakistan, or China or both, with or without naming them (Rajiv and Narasimha Rao) or deliver broadsides against unmentioned America (Indira Gandhi) or announce a national holiday for the Prophet's birthday (VP Singh) Morarji Desai had used a full one hour to run down a land-grab bid by Jat landowners in a Delhi village while Charan Singh announced development of nuclear weapons without knowing what he was saying

And here was Inder Kumar Gujral putting compulsory primary education and 'an equal share to women' on 'the national agenda'—for the first time perhaps in the last fifty years—and it gets buried in pedestrian reporting of the event Admittedly, his dilation on corruption and the emphasis he laid on fighting it on many fronts has stolen the limelight But a companion story at the leg of the main report would have done justice to the occasion

◆

SCEPTICS might argue that, like the latter part of Nehru's 'tryst with destiny' oration, Gujral's commitment was only for the record and not for being carried out It is all the more necessary, then, to project it and pin him down As I see it, that is what is meant by putting it on the national agenda I remember when Rajiv Gandhi got the so-called anti-defamation law passed, he and other party leaders, as well as government Ministers, were confronted with the issue wherever they went Even in district towns reporters would raise the subject with Ministers and Congress party functionaries Why can't Central and State Ministers be asked about the progress of the compulsory primary education programme whenever they meet the Press? With the kind of niggardly play the story got in the newspapers, how can it be put on the national agenda? Even *The Hindustan Times* report, after talking of the 'agenda for the nation' in the 'intro', relegated it to the third paragraph Still, it is the best among the lot, with gender equity also figuring in the second paragraph *The Times of India* version from its foreign policy expert mentioned 'education of the girl child' instead of universal primary education in the penultimate section of the 12-para story It then took off at a tangent to talk of education for the male child and more legislation to bar child labour (There are enough laws on the subject, incidentally)

In the *Deccan Herald* report, it is the thirteenth item in the 'box' array of 'Highlights' Instead of universal primary education, it was given as 'welfare measures for girl children' The report from the agencies in the *Andhra Pradesh Times* put it in a catalogue of priorities among which formation of Uttarakhand gets the pride of place If this is the concern of journalists for universal primary education, how can we blame the politicians?

◆

MEANWHILE surprisingly, *The Tribune* story of the Pandits rebuffing the interim report of the committee set up by the Jammu and Kashmir Government on rehabilitation of 'migrants' in their abandoned homes and hearths in the Valley has not been noticed by other newspapers It is important because the migrants, as the nearly 50,000 families of Pandits flushed out by the terrorists are called, are spread out in Jammu, Delhi, Bombay and Bangalore, among other cities, and have been eking out a miserable existence in makeshift camps According to *The Tribune* report, the committee linked their rehabilitation to Central assistance of the order of Rs 2799 crores

It is this 'emphasis on economic incentives for their return rather than ways of improving the security scenario' which has rightly upset the Pandits Their spokesman aptly pointed out that 'what the displaced persons need is a rehabilitation package, not economic incentives, for their return' He eloquently added that there was no 'visible sign of organised mobilisation of opinion by the government or non-government agencies to create a climate of goodwill for the social acceptance of the miniscule minority, which has been the tradition of Kashmir' It is necessary for the metropolitan newspapers to give due coverage to such reports to make the Farooq Abdullah Government wake up to its responsibility ■

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Netaji Subhas and the Communal Problem in India

PANCHANAN SAHA

The scourge of communalism has caused havoc in the history of modern India. The terrible communal holocaust and the subsequent partition of India in 1947 on the basis of religion resulted in incalculable hardships to millions of people. Communalism has retarded the progress of India. Even after fifty years of independence communalism plagues the sub-continent.

On the occasion of the birth centenary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose as well as the fifty years of India's independence, it is pertinent to recall the ideas of Netaji on the communal problem of India in order to draw proper lessons to fight communalism of all hues in present-day India.

◆

NETAJI SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE was one of the few national leaders who possessed a really broad and modern outlook on the communal problem of India. He was not only a theoretician but had shown in practice the example of communal amity when he founded the Azad Hind Government and the 'Azad Hind Fauj' abroad.

Rabindranath Tagore's private secretary, Anil Chanda, in a letter to Jawaharlal Nehru on November 28, 1938 has correctly written that in Tagore's opinion, "there are only two genuine modernists in the High Command—you and Subhasbabu".[1]

He was deeply religious, no doubt, but he considered religion a personal matter. He opposed mixing religion with politics. He spent his boyhood in an atmosphere of communal harmony and did not even think that Hindus and Muslims were separate to each other. The broad and liberal religious outlook of Swami Vivekananda had influenced him tremendously. He had always thought that the Indian nation composed of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Christians.

Casting his lot with Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, Subhas soon became his most trusted lieutenant in Congress politics. He was elected the Secretary of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee with Deshbandhu as the President. It seems that Netaji's ideas of solving the vexed communal problem took concrete shape under Deshbandhu's influence during his brief political life in India (1921-1941). During this period he was in prison in the non-cooperation days, again in 1925-27. He spent about five years abroad (from February 1933, except in prison from April 1936 to March 1937). He was again interned in 1940. In spite of his hectic political activities and imprisonments he tried to tackle the communal problem of India in right earnest following the path of Deshbandhu.

The deep-rooted misunderstanding between the Hindus and Muslims and their hatred towards each other to some extent on some questions was successfully utilised by the British imperialist rulers to prolong their rule. By applying the policy of 'divide and rule', the imperialist rulers widened the rift between the two. The Hindu-Muslim unity which was temporarily achieved during the non-cooperation and Khilafat days was badly damaged after the sudden withdrawal of the non-cooperation movement by Gandhiji on the Chauri Chaura incident. The people felt frustrated and communalism reared its ugly head all over India. The country was repeatedly plunged into communal riots between the Hindus and Muslims. The communal elements got the upper hand. The Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha which were dormant during the non-cooperation days once again became active. Gandhiji in his own fashion went into twentyone days fast in September 1924 ostensibly to do penance for the inhumanity perpetrated by the anti-social elements of the two communities in the communal riots. But his efforts had no tangible effect in terms of improving the communal situation.

Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das tried to heal the communal breach in such a scenario by coming to an understanding with the Muslims. The Muslims in India have been economically and educationally backward due to some historical reasons. They were also suffering from a minority complex. Perhaps Maulana Abul Kalam Azad had correctly assessed the Muslim mind in his Congress Presidential speech at Ramgarh session in 1940 He said that

> the same policy of divide and rule took particular shape in the minds of British officialdom in India after the Congress launched the national movement The object of this was to prepare the Mussalmans for use against the new political awakening In this plan, prominence was given to two points First, that India was inhabited by the two different communities, the Hindus and Mussalmans, and for this reason no demand could be made in the name of a united nation
>
> Second, that numerically the Mussalmans were far less than the Hindus and because of this, the necessary consequence of the establishment of democratic institutions in India would be to establish the rule of the Hindu majority and to jeopardise the existence of the Muslims [2]

◆

DESHBANDHU CHITTARANJAN envisaged the signing of an all-India pact with the Muslim leaders in order to give them some weightage in the political field to bridge the gap between the two communities in order to thwart the sinister British plan Subhas was a strong supporter of this move Meanwhile Das declared his famous plan—'Bengal Pact'—in order to remove the gap between the Hindus and Muslims in Bengal In the Conference of his Swarajya Party held during October 16-17, 1923 the Bengal Pact was accepted to establish Hindu-Muslim friendship and unity

> The pact provided that representation in the Bengal Legislative Council would be through joint electorates on the basis of population It also provided the special weightage to Muslims till they made up their deficiency in the services and attained a proportion commensurate with their numbers [3]

It was proposed that in municipalities and local self-governments, the Muslims would get sixty per cent seats and the rest Hindus In government services the Muslims would get sixty per cent posts There were other provisions which dealt with matters like music before mosques and cow slaughter It was proposed that the two communities would refrain from any act which would hurt the feelings of the other community

The Bengal Pact was adopted in the Provincial Conference of the Congress but was rejected at the Coconada Congress in 1923 It was attacked by the communalists of both sides The Hindu communalists held that Deshbandhu had surrendered the interests of the Hindus to win the confidence of the Muslims The Muslim communalists held that the whole Pact was nothing but a camouflage in order to undermine the hold of Muslim leaders on their own community

Subhas Chandra supporting wholeheartedly the Bengal Pact wrote in his book, *The Indian Struggle 1920-42*

> In the domain of the Hindu-Moslem relations, too, the Deshbandhu was a unifying force His 'Bengal Pact' which had been rejected by the Coconada Congress in December 1923, but had been ratified by the Provincial conference in May 1924, had served to convince all Moslems that he was the real friend That such a man was at the head of the Swaraj Party helped to rally Moslem support for that party and as a matter of fact, the Swaraj Party in the Bengal Legislative Council had a large number of Moslem members who had been elected on the basis of a separate electorate With the death of the Deshbandhu, the Moslem community no longer retained their former confidence in the Swaraj Party [4]

Maulana Azad also held the same view "The result was that the Muslims of Bengal moved away from the Congress and the first seeds of partition were sown," he wrote He added further

> The repudiation of this Pact was one of the factors which led to increasing discord between Hindus and Muslims culminating in the partition of the country [5]

Communal riots erupted in Calcutta in 1926 Bose was then in Mandalay prison He wrote from there that communalism was not racism Hindu-Muslim understanding was required but not on the basis of separate electorate He viewed the problem from a different angle Blaming the British policy of 'divide and rule' for the communal problem of India, he wrote from Mandalay prison in 1926

> Any suffering of any nationality in India must be felt as one's own suffering, any glory as one's own glory The temple of Lord Jagannath (at Puri) and the Taj Mahal are equally objects of my pride The internecine disputes and quarrels that have taken place between different nationalities and religions in India have been like quarrels within a family—quarrels that come to an end with maturity Toleration is not a characteristic feature of childhood—we do not therefore practice toleration The day will come when conflicts between the Hindus and Muslims will end much in the same way as conflicts between the Roman Catholics and Protestants have ended (in the West) [6]

◆

MEANWHILE attempts were made to solve the problem afresh An attempt was made in 1928 to draw an agreed Constitution for India In an all-party conference, a Committee was appointed to do the job Motilal Nehru was elected the Chairman of the Committee with Ali Imam, Tej Bahadur Sapru and Subhas Chandra Bose as members The Nehru Report recommended that the attainment of 'Dominion Status' should be the next step It proposed that India should be a federation of linguistic provinces Provinces would be granted autonomy The executive should be fully responsible to the legislature It also recommended a joint electorate system on the basis of adult suffrage Seats should be reserved for the religious minorities for ten years

Unfortunately the all-party conference, again held in Calcutta in December 1928, failed to pass the Report Rather M A Jinnah, the President of the Muslim League, put forward his famous 'Fourteen Points' vitiating the communal atmosphere The Fourteen Points contained separate electorate and reservation of one-third seats for the Muslims in the Central Legislature and reservation of Muslim seats in Bengal and Punjab in proportion to the population Thus the prospects of attaining national unity were foiled

In the meantime, things began to move in quick succession The complete Independence Resolution was adopted by the Lahore session of the Indian National Congress in 1929 under the Chairmanship of Jawaharlal Nehru The Civil Disobedience Movement was launched by Gandhiji in 1930 Except for the North-Western Frontier Province, the response of the Muslim masses was lukewarm to the Civil disobedience Movement The failure of the Round Table Conference, the Communal Award and ultimately the proclamation of the Government of India Act 1935 came in rapid succession The Civil Disobedience Movement almost failed

In this changed situation, the Congress took part in the general elections in 1937 held under the 1935 Constitution The Congress swept the poll in most of the provinces and it formed Ministries in seven provinces out of eleven Later the Congress formed coalition governments in another two Only Bengal and Punjab had non-Congress Ministries

The Muslim League, on the other hand, fared poorly in the Muslim seats The Congress also failed to get enough seats reserved for the Muslims The attempts of Khaliquzzaman, the Muslim League leader of UP to form the Congress-Muslim League coalition Ministry failed making the Muslim League bitter M A Jinnah became a sharp critic of the Congress by declaring that the Hindus and Muslims were separate nations The failure of the coalition in UP was utilised by Jinnah to arouse communal passion among the Muslims Jinnah alleged that the Congress had

> by their words, deeds and programme shown, more and more, that the Mussalmans cannot expect any justice or fair play at their hands Wherever they were in a majority and wherever it suited them, they refused to cooperate with the Muslim League parties and demanded unconditional surrender and signing of their pledge [7]

Jinnah's Presidential speech in October 1937 at the Muslim League session was a virtual declaration of war against the Congress S Wazir Hasan in a letter to Jawaharlal Nehru on February 11, 1938 gives a clear picture of the League's propaganda

> That the Congress is a Hindu organisation (2) That it wants to establish not Swaraj but Hindu Raj (3) That the Congress and its governments in seven provinces are trying to oppress and crush the minorities particularly the Mussalmans (4) That the Muslim League is the true representative of the views and ideas of the eighty million Mussalmans of India (5) That there are very few Mussalmans in the Congress and these few are traitors to Islam [8]

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SUBHASH CHANDRA BOSE was elected the Congress President at this juncture Naturally he inherited the communal problem that had to be tackled He said in his Presidential Address in Haripura in 1938 that "the Muslim problem looms large whenever we think of the question of minorities" and "we are anxious to settle this problem finally" How? He prescribed that it could be solved

> by emphasising our common interests, economic and political, we can cut across communal divisions and dissensions A policy of live and let live in matters religious, and understanding in matters economic and political, should be our objective [9]

He assured the Muslims and other minorities that

> if after the capture of political power national reconstruction takes place on socialistic lines—as I have no doubt, it will—it is the 'have-nots' who will benefit at the expense of the 'haves' and the Indian masses have to be classified among the 'have-nots' There remains but one question which may be a source of anxiety to the minorities, namely, religion and that aspect of culture which is based on religion On this question, the Congress policy is one of live and let live—a policy of complete non-interference in matters of conscience, religion and culture, as well as of cultural autonomy for the different linguistic areas The Muslims have, therefore, nothing to fear in the event of India winning her freedom, on the contrary they have everything to gain [10]

In Bengal, neither the Krishak Praja Party of Fazlul Huq nor the Congress could form the government alone after the general elections Fazlul Huq won more Muslim seats than the Muslim League But it was not possible for him to form the Ministry The Bengal Provincial Congress was vacillating to form the coalition government with Huq on some flimsy grounds The Congress High Command rather took a more stringent measure by asking the Provincial Congress to even stop negotiations with Huq Ultimately this move led him to the lap of the Muslim League, a development which proved to be ruinous for the nation Writes B M Choudhury

> At least Mr Huq could be prevented from joining the League if the Congress policy in Bengal had been directed wisely The Congress leaders did not see that Bengal held the key to the solution of the all-India communal problem

> At any rate a Congress-Praja coalition would have isolated the League, made it still more weak and nipped Pakistan in the bud The mistake was realised but too late [11]

Huq's joining the Muslim League greatly assisted the League in strengthening its position in the countryside of Bengal The League's understanding with Sikandar Hayat Khan in Punjab also placed it on a firm foundation The new tactic of the League was to strengthen the hold of Islam among the Muslim masses "to provide the sanction for the demand of the Muslim upper and middle classes for the jobs and security" [12] The communal sentiments spread among the Muslim masses by leaps and bounds thanks to the policy pursued by the League The National Congress failed miserably to check the growth of communalism and anti-Congress feeling among the Muslim masses The Congress policy of working among the Muslim masses was abandoned It was a suicidal policy KM Ashraf wrote

> It is remarkable that Jinnah and Shaukat Ali have worked themselves in a mad fury just because we have decided to work among the masses [13]

In this situation instead of working tirelessly among the Muslim masses, the National Congress began to correspond with the Muslim League in order to find an agreeable solution to the Hindu-Muslim problem In this way the status and prestige of the Muslim League was enhanced indirectly by the Congress Jinnah declared that

> Muslim League has now come to live and play its just part in the world of Indian politics

In spite of its negotiations with the League on the Hindu-Muslim problem, the Congress refused to accept the League as the authorative representative of the Muslims which infuriated Jinnah most Jinnah's talks with Gandhiji failed on this question

◆

Now Subhas Chandra Bose as the new Congress President continued to hold discussions with the Muslim League and Jinnah to find an agreeable solution of this vexed problem He too had turned down Jinnah's demand of accepting the League as the sole representative organisation of the Muslims of India Bose declared that the Congress could not give up its national character by accepting the unjust demand of the League Bose alongwith Gandhiji, Nehru, Azad, Rajendra Prasad and Patel stated that they would favour an amicable settlement of the communal problem without compromising the Congress ideals The discussion between Jinnah and Bose never progressed beyond the stage of "the examination of credentials" [14] Jinnah wrote to Bose on June 5, 1938, that the Executive Council of the League had passed a resolution reiterating that the Congress must recognise the League as the only representative body of Muslims in India Besides, the Congress could not invite representatives of other Muslim organisations to participate in any talk that might take place [15] Bose replied to Jinnah by rejecting the proposal that it would be "not only impossible, but improper" for the Congress to agree that the League was the sole representative of Muslims [16] Thus the Bose-Jinnah correspondence went on in vain for about a few months till October 1938 Bose wrote to Nehru on October 19, 1938

> There is the Hindu-Muslim question Mr Jinnah is unreasonable and intransigent [17]

Jinnah, on the other hand, firmly stood on his old position He wrote to Nehru on December 13, 1939

> So long as the Congress is not prepared to treat the Muslim League as the authorative and representative organisation of the Mussalmans of India it was not possible to carry on talks regarding the Hindu-Muslim settlement [18]

The Congress Working Committee by adopting a resolution declared the Muslim League and Hindu Mahasabha as communal organisations and forbade any Congress worker to be associated with them

While continuing negotiations with the Congress, Jinnah went on preaching communal hatred In October 1937 at the Lucknow session of the League he declared

> The present leadership of the Congress, especially during the last ten years, has been responsible for alienating the Mussalmans of India more and more by pursuing a policy, which is exclusively Hindu, and since they have formed governments in six provinces where they are in majority, they have by their words, deeds and programme shown that the Mussalmans cannot expect any justice or fairplay at their hands On the threshold of what little power and responsibility is given, the majority community have clearly shown their hand that Hindustan is for the Hindus [19]

He had also stated that the

> Hindus and Muslims belong to two different religious philosophies, social customs, literature They neither intermarry, nor interdine together and indeed they belong to two different civilisations which are based mainly on conflicting ideas and conceptions [20]

The communal tension further accentuated after the publication of the Pirpur Report of the League The Report tried to expose the highhandedness and hostility of the Hindus in the Congress-led provinces towards Muslims causing damage to the lives and properties of Muslims It also alleged attacks on Muslim religious and cultural values Among the issues highlighted by the Report were the singing of *Bande Mataram*, which was considered 'positively anti-Islamic and idolatrous in its inspiration and ideas' and hoisting of the Congress flag in public places, attacks on the religious rights of the Muslims to cow slaughter as well as suppression of the Urdu language by the Congress Governments Even Fazlul Huq, who was then the Premier of Bengal in 1938, said at the League session

> In Congress provinces, riots had laid the countryside waste Muslim life, limb and property have been lost and blood has freely flowed Their mosques are being defiled and the culprit never found nor is the Muslim worshippers unmolested [21]

Netaji's Ideas to Solve Language Problem

ONE of the main charges of the Muslim League was that the Congress Ministries were suppressing the Urdu language—the language to which the Muslims were sentimentally attached Subhas Chandra came forward with a novel idea to allay the fear psychosis from the minds of the Muslims by proposing Hindustani—a mixture of Hindu and Urdu—as the *lingua franca* to be written either in Nagri or Urdu script He went further by proposing Hindustani to be written in the Roman script It was definitely a bold statement which infuriated the Hindu communalists most he said in his Haripura Congress Presidential speech

> So far as our *lingua franca* is concerned, I am inclined to think that the distinction between Hindu and Urdu is an artificial one The most natural *lingua franca* would be a mixture of the two, such as is spoken in daily life in large portions of the country, and this common language may be written in either of the two scripts, Nagri or Urdu

He added further

> I am inclined to think that the ultimate solution and the best solution would be the adoption of a script that would bring us into line with rest of the world Perhaps, some of our countrymen will gape with horror when they hear of the adoption of the Roman script, but I would beg them to consider this problem from the scientific and historical point of view

There was nothing sacrosanct in a script The introduction of a uniform script throughout India would be a step to national integration It was nothing anti-national He recalled his experience in Turkey in 1934 where the Roman script was introduced by Kemal Ataturk [22]

Azad Hind Experiment

NETAJI founded his Azad Hind Fauj and Azad Hind Government with equal consideration for the Muslims, Sikhs and the Hindus There was no religious distinction in Azad Hind Fauj "In India we have many gods and religions but everything is only *Jai Hind* here," was the quip that went around

He adopted Hindustani in the Roman script as the official language of the Azad Hind Government

Netaji spelt out his outlook in solving the minority problem of India in an article in *Azad Hind*, the official publication of Berlin's Free India Centre in August 1942

> The State will guarantee complete religious and cultural freedom for individuals and groups and there will be no State religion In the matter of political and economic rights there will be perfect equality among the whole population When every individual has employment, food and education and has freedom in religious and cultural matters, there will be no more any minorities problem in India

◆

AFTER fifty years of independence and partition of the country, any impartial observer will find that the responsibility of the partition of the country did not solely rest with the Muslim league or the British policy of 'divide and rule' Unfortunately the Indian National Congress was also to be blamed squarely for communalism and partition The veteran historian, K M Ashraf, perhaps correctly stated

> I need not go into the reasons why the Muslim League should have turned overnight into a full-fledged manager but this was partly due to the opportunity offered by Congress tactics during these years when they deliberately abandoned the struggle of mass contact for Ministry making

He further added

> I was fully convinced that any honest and consistent anti imperialist struggle led by the Congress would wean away the Muslim masses from the growing influence of Jinna and the revival of the Muslim League [23]

India needed an uncompromising national leade like Subhas Chandra Bose at the crucial hour o India's future The veteran journalist and historian Nikhil Chakravartty, has correctly written

> For one thing, Netaji's arrival at the final round of th freedom struggle would have changed the very nature that struggle, and instead of the compromise of the ignom nious partition under British supervision, there would ha been the definite possibility of an outright transfer of pow without the blood-soaked partition In the very nature of h government-in-exile, one could see his remarkable statesma ship in forging communal brotherhood [24]

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FREEDOM AT FIFTY

Towards Sustainable Democracy

B MEENA RAO and M. VIJAYALAKSHMI

It is an irony that as India celebrates fifty years of independence, the political discourse should centre around the issue of political malaise and a 'virtual collapse" of our democratic polity The survival and stability of Indian democracy has for ong evoked much admiration Even noted econonists Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen observe that the strength of India is the resilience of its democratic ramework Current trends show that the course of olitical development at the national and State evels in the near future remains uncertain, due in arge part to the extreme instability of constitutional tructures The expectation that parties and governing tructures will serve the interest of civil society is ast fading The Indian polity has been exposed as xtensively polluted and fear grows over the very urvival of the democratic system of governance oreign observers are openly expressing the view at there seems to be too much of politics in India hich is upsetting the rhythm of economic progress roding democratic ethos and human values and e pervasiveness of opportunistic politics have erally hijacked the nation's agenda

The erosion of state power in mediating social nflicts and the growing loss of faith in the political ocess are producing conditions of not just political stability but of incipient breakdown of the social order The crisis that we face is caused by the failure and default of the system, not merely of its governing structure The scepticism arising out of this situation had led to a debate on the need to envisage an alternative to the prevailing party system and the political system based on it, to the extreme option of authoritarian rule Democracies, though messier, are safer Gandhiji rightly said "Democracy is not a state in which people behave like sheep" It is pertinent to observe that Rajni Kothari diagnosed the current political malaise as the "failure of the people" The corrective to India's failing parliamentary democracy lies in people's activism and public initiative

Dr (Mrs) B Meena Rao is a Reader, and Dr (Mrs) M Vijayalakshmi a Research Associate, Department of Politics and Public Administration, Andhra University

◆

In a democracy supreme power vests in the people and is exercised by them either directly, as in the old village panchayats of our own country and the old city-states of Europe, or when that becomes impractical by their elected representatives Europe moved from direct to representative democracy when its city-states were absorbed by the newly emerging nation-states, which being compact were comfortable with unitary rule India at independence chose representative democracy straightaway as the only feasible option and being large and diverse fedralised it by extending it beyond the Centre to the States

Parliamentary government is the form of constitutional democracy in which executive authority emerges from, and is responsible to legislative authority Developed in Western Europe, and particularly Great Britain, the parliamentary system is not so much an invention as it is an evolutionary product Its essential union of executive and legislative authority is not simply a deliberate constitutional design It is more significantly the culmination of the process by which representative assemblies successfully challenged monarchs in the course of modern history The outstanding feature of historical experience was the evolution of parliament from a monarch's council to a supremacy of its own

The parliamentary system has been differently conceived not only over time but also from country to country The view that the parliamentary body itself, rather than the Cabinet, was the effective policy-making authority remained a prevailing French conception in the form of "government by assembly" long after it had lost meaning in the British system By the middle of the nineteenth century, often viewed as the classical period of parliamentary government, the British Cabinet had assumed a central importance

In the twentieth century, however, the original British model changed as the Cabinet increasingly had the support of the cohesive majority and thus stayed in office from one general election to the next The British Parliament was no longer expected to exercise its power to dismiss a government Parliament remained to register the electorate's decision as to which party's leadership was to form the Cabinet, but parliamentary debates lost the impact they had formerly had on the life of the government In the last two decades India's parliamentary democracy has also seen the vicissitudes of changing institutional rhythms Criminalisation of politics, corruption, political parties *sans* ideological values, fractured mandate have reduced our parliament to simply govern 'arithmetic' politics How 'representative' is our parliamentary democracy?

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THE stability of India's democracy has often been attributed to a balance of interest groups, perhaps able to successfully represent to a reasonable extent a potentially discordant social landscape The central director of political adjustment was the Congress party Its central role in the freedom struggle gave the Congress party an additional advantage and until the late 1960s it exercised a formidable organisational dominance The last two decades are witness to emerging contradictory trends of awakening and degeneration in the Indian political environment The process of awakening led to democratisation reflected in the increasing self-assertion and political participation of hitherto silent groups Small landowners, traders, unionised workers, middle-level caste groups entered the arena of electoral politics This coincided with the grave weakening of the Congress party as an organisation resulting from self-seeking action of the political leaders themselves The organisational vacuum left by the Congress party has not been filled by other parties The party system has been greatly eroded with the organisation of the Congress itself having surrendered to lumpen elements masquerading as public leaders It is alien to talk of inner party democracy and collective leadership Self-seeking politicians have contributed in a big way to the decline of the party as an instrument of leadership change and the structure of power, and as the principal mediator between state and society The eclipse of the party organisation and gradual erosion of the role of the state raised the threshold of both corruption and criminalisation and of communal and caste-based politics, as Rajni Kothari observes These variables were very much in operation under the Congress system But with the breakdown of the party system this culture has taken crude forms

When established institutions give way and nothing systematic is put in their place a situation of uncertainty, confusion and insecurity prevails, reminiscent of a 'state of nature', where might is right

That the system is rotting to the core is an inescapable reality It is high time we affirm that the man who enters politics and treats it as a business has no business to go into politics There is no denying that "the purification of politics is an iridescent dream" Yet one cannot be apathetic to the magnitude of political chaos, corruption, scams and deprivation Shourie, referring to the complimentary role played by social groups in the United States who chip in where the state fails, states that our colonial past still makes us look up to the authority as the provider of everything This tendency stifles initiative

Public spirited leaders should initiate a movement for sustainable democracy Transparency and accountability through decentralisation and devolution can improve the efficiency of government Governmental apathy and misdirection can be checked by voluntary action No democratic system can be healthy without a responsible citizenry ■

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS (AUGUST 17-23, 1997)

NATIONAL

August 17

- Prime Minister I K Gujral tells *The Observer* (London) in an exclusive interview "We have suggested as a government to the British that it would be much better if she (the Queen) doesn't visit Amritsar, particularly when such issues have been raised" He was referring to the demand for an apology from the British monarch for the 1919 Jallianwala Bagh massacre and the return of the Kohinoor diamond
- General Secretary of the All India Railwaymen's Federation J P Chaubey announces in Hyderabad that 16 5 lakh railway employees will go on an indefinite strike from September 24 in protest against the negative recommendations of the Fifth Central Pay Commission
- Samajwadi Party President Mulayam Singh Yadav, the Defence Minister, addressing a press conference in Lucknow, says "If there could be reservation for women in politics, then there was an equally strong case for reservation for Muslims too"

August 18

- Prime Minister Gujral's advice to Queen Elizabeth II not to visit Amritsar is termed by Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee as "unfortunate and inexplicable" and part of "a conspiracy to scuttle the Queen's visit to Harmandir Sahib"
- Sandalwood smuggling don and terror of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, Veerappan, agrees to release the eight Karnataka Forest Department officials, held hostage by him since July 12, and surrender provided he is assured that his life and that of the members of his gang would be protected
- Government of India will implement a World Bank assisted Malaria Eradication Programme with an outlay of Rs 891 crores over the next five years, announces Union Health Minister Ms Renuka Chowdhary at the Second Global Meet on Parasitic Diseases at Hyderabad

August 19

- Assam Government replaces its Chief Secretary T K Kamilla and clamps indefinite curfew in parts of Nalbari district to prevent ethnic riots between Bodo tribals and minority Bengalis Assam Assembly Speaker Ganesh Kutum leads an all-party peace mission to the affected villages while the Assembly admits a Congress sponsored no-trust motion, supported by the BJP, against Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta's five-party coalition government
- Union Home Minister Indrajit Gupta in a letter to Manipur Chief Minister, rules out unification of Naga inhabited areas of bordering States with Nagaland
- Karnataka and Tamil Nadu Chief Ministers meet in Chennai and agree to accept Veerappan's terms for surrender The exact date and venue of surrender is to be decided after their emissary *Nakkeeran* editor PR Gopal meets him in his jungle hide-out

August 20

- Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee chief Gurcharan Singh Tohra says in a communique that Sikhs in Amritsar would accord Queen Elizabeth II a rousing welcome and urges her to visit the Golden Temple He adds that "the demand for an apology is a conspiracy by those forces who did not want her to visit Amritsar"
- Train links between Assam and the rest of the country are cut off as a concrete bridge is blown off, allegedly by Bodo rebels, near Salakati railway station in Kokrajhar district of western Assam
- Congress President Sitaram Kesri nominates Oscar Fernandes, J B Patnaik, Ms Meira Kumar and Mizoram Chief Minister Lalthanwala to the Congress Working Committee, still keeping three seats vacant
- Janata Party President Subramaniam Swamy alleges that Union Finance Minister P Chidambaram took a bribe of Rs 100 crores to waive "hundreds of crores in penalty and interest in customs and excise exemptions claimed illegally by various industrial houses and export firms" Swamy says he would move the court after the Public Accounts Committee tables its report in Parliament

August 21

- President K R Narayanan administers oath of office and secrecy to Vice-President Krishan Kant, 70, in the presence of Prime Minister I K Gujral, five former Prime Ministers, members of the Union Council of Ministers and a galaxy of other dignitaries
- Immediately after the swearing-in ceremony, Prime Minister tells reporters at the Rashtrapati Bhawan, "The Queen is an honoured guest of India She is welcome to visit any part of the country and there is no restriction on her itinerary"
- Union Home Minister Indrajit Gupta says in Kannur "The CPI-M had lost a very big opportunity by refusing to accept the United Front's offer to Jyoti Basu to lead the country as the Prime Minister"
- UF Steering Committee leaves the question of petroleum price hike to the Cabinet
- Former Chief of Punjab Police, K P S Gill, is appointed Security Advisor to the State Government by Assam CM Prafulla Kumar Mahanta

August 22

- Lok Sabha Speaker P A Sangma delivers the annual lecture of the Oxford and Cambridge Society of India and, inter alia, says, "The Prime Minister must belong to the Lok Sabha, that is what parliamentary democracy is all about" In reply to a question he adds "In a coalition government, particularly in our context, the status of the Prime Minister comes under considerable strain This has serious implications for decision making in government, which in turn, manifests itself in the business of Parliament"
- Heavy rains throughout the day bring life to a standstill in Mumbai and severely disrupt the road, rail and air traffic
- Addressing the 12th All-India Whips Conference in Srinagar (J&K), Prime Minister Gujral says "Every inch of Kashmir belongs to India" "very soon the dream of preserving a united and unified Kashmir shall come true"

August 23

- CBI picks up several observations from the 12th Report of the Public Accounts Committee headed by Dr Murli Manohar Joshi for a detailed probe against Star TV's Indian Operation Chief Executive Officer Ratikant Basu, formerly DG, Doordarshan The charges include misappropriation of revenue generated from free commercial time and possible FERA violations concerning a "friendly deal" between Basu and a well-known private producer

- Union Home Secretary K Padmanabhaiah says in Guwahati that the Centre is bringing about a major restructuring of intelligence agencies in Assam and also thinking of widening the use of National Security Act to book terrorists and criminals
- Congress President Sitaram Kesri gives the green signal for the withdrawal of support to the 10-month old Shankersinh Vaghela Ministry in Gujarat and he will himself make the final assault on August 31 when he addresses the proposed rally at Ahmedabad
- Life in Mumbai remains paralysed in spite of a let-up in the rains and partial restoration of road, rail and air traffic Death toll caused by the downpour rises to 15
- Samajwadi Party President Mulayam Singh Yadav tells reporters at Etawah that his party might contest future elections in alliance with the Congress

INTERNATIONAL

August 17

- Israeli warplanes bomb Naameh hillsides in Lebanon targetting bases of the pro-Syrian Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine The General Command of the Front, however, reports no casualties in the two air attacks saying "The base was abandoned 10 years ago"
- Burmese ruling junta announces that a special court has sentenced three cousins of Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of National League for Democracy, on charges of involvement in a US funded terrorist conspiracy
- A dawn to dusk general strike called by four Communist Parties brings life to a halt in Kathmandu Police resort to lathi-charge at many places and arrest some 500 persons to disperse demonstrators

August 18

- US Ambassador to Pakistan Thomas Symons says in an interview to daily *Jang* in Islamabad that his country was considering a proposal to invite the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan to the United States to sit together and have free and frank talks to sort out their differences
- Britain's anti-terrorist unit arrests in South London Jagroop Singh Batth and Jasbir Singh Ghuman, belonging to the separatist group Babbar Khalsa, allegedly involved in plans to kill Punjab Finance Minister Capt Kanwaljit Singh who was in London recently
- Sir Lanka's Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) issues a statement from its London office asking the US Government not to authorise sale of aircraft and military hardware to Sri Lanka as Israeli-built KFIR jets, which are subject to US permission for sale, are being used by the Sri Lanka Government to bomb Tamil civilians
- Within two days of its passage by the Pakistan National Assembly, the anti-terrorism bill is challenged in the Lahore High Court for being a license to kill and ultra vires of the Pakistan Constitution
- Israel decides to unfreeze thirty per cent of the $70 million, due to Palestine in tax and revenue collection and impounded following last month's suicide bombings The rest of the tax money remains frozen and a travel ban on Palestinians remains in place

August 19

- US Embassy in Islamabad denies there was any plan to hold a trilateral meeting between the US President and the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan Embassy spokesman William Simon Jr says "The Ambassador was misunderstood"
- Natural Resources Defence Council, a US non-profit organisation of scientists, lawyers and environmentalists, releases to the press a declassified document which says the US has a 15-year $ 10 billion plan to "modify and develop new nuclear arms despite its signing the CTBT last September"
- Cosmonauts on the Russian space station *Mir* replace the faulty computer part which had broken down sending the space station into an erratic flight path and sharply cutting power
- Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif addresses a gathering in the Faisal Mosque in Islamabad to mark the ninth death anniversary of Gen Zia-ul-Haq, Chief Martial Law Administrator for 11 years, and assures "I will continue Zia-ul-Haq's mission and enforce the Islamic Shariat in the country"

August 20

- Minister at the German Chancellery Friedrich Bohl tells a news conference that Germany would pay individual compensation to Jewish survivors of the Holocaust in Eastern Europe more than 50 years ago
- Taiwan Prime Minister Lien Chan, one of the richest men in the island republic, decides to resign, in view of the mounting criticism from the public for ever rising crime wave He will still remain Vice-President and a possible successor to President Lee Teng-hui
- Sri Lankan Army discloses that LTTE militants fired an American-made Stinger missile at Air Force KFIR jets returning from action in the Mullaitivu area where 130 LTTE men and 30 soldiers were killed

August 21

- Spokesman of the Pakistan Foreign Office says in Islamabad that "Jammu and Kashmir is universally recognised disputed territory" whose future has to be decided by a UN-supervised plebiscite
- China exports a computer system developed indigenously for use in the nuclear power plant being constructed by that country in Pakistan
- Iranian Parliament approves the 22-member Cabinet of President Mohammad Khatami in spite earlier conservative opposition to the nomination of Cultural Minister Ataollah Mohajerani and Interior Minister Abdollah Nouri

August 22

- Labour's Parliamentary Kashmir Group refuses to have any dialogue with the All-Parties Kashmir Coordinating Committee of the Pakistan supported Kashmiri groups in UK, on the grounds that it is not the legitimate representative of the Kashmiri people
- Key leader of the anti-Taliban alliance in Afghanistan Abdul Rahim Ghafoorzai, selected only last week to be the alliance's PM, dies in an air crash while going to Bamiyan for talks on forming the alliance Cabinet

August 23

- Pakistan Minister for Health Makhdoom Javed Hashmi castigates Pakistan People's Party chief Benazir Bhutto for supporting the idea of independent Kashmir which is against the Partition of India Act and Security Council resolutions He demands that the former Prime Minister of Pakistan should be tried for treason
- Gallop Pakistan Survey, conducted among 1000 people from a cross section of society, reveals that a majority among the polled feel that Pakistan is threatened not by India but by rising terrorism, breakdown of law and order and corruption ■

Posted at CPSO in New Delhi on August 29/30, 1997 Delhi Postal REGD No DL-11037/97

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Freedom implies not only emancipation from political bondage but also equal distribution of wealth, abolition of caste barriers and social inequities, and destruction of communalism and religious intolerance.

Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose

Sah Brothers

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Edited and published by Sumit Chakravartty *for* PERSPECTIVE PUBLICATIONS PRIVATE LTD, 1E/12, "Sewak House" (First Floor), Jhandewalan Extension, New Delhi-110055 Tel 7516763, 7516893 *Printed at* NEW DELHI PRINTERS, 20/7 Old Market, West Patel Nagar, New Delhi-110008 *Editor* Sumit Chakravartty *Editorial Adviser* Nikhil Chakravartty *General Manager* Praveen Mehta *Executive Manager* Jasjit Kay Nagra

Mainstream

VOL XXXV No 39 September 6,1997 Rs 7

Decisions on the Oil Front

KULDIP NAYAR

Debating National Issues beyond Party Lines

NINAN KOSHY

IRA Bill and the Autonomous Finance Ministry

R.M. PAL

Universal Primary Education and the PM's Agenda

AMITAVA MUKHERJEE

Letter from Calcutta : PL Accounts Scam

D. BANDYOPADHYAY'S SPECIAL ARTICLE ON TWO DECADES OF LEFT FRONT RULE IN WEST BENGAL—"THE BOTTOMLINE IS *CAFÉ AU LAIT*"

Decisions on the Oil Front

The much-anticipated price hike of petroleum products has eventually taken place. With effect from the midnight of September 1-2, the price (excluding taxes) of petrol has gone up by Re 1 per litre, of diesel by Rs 1 80 per litre, and of cooking gas by Rs 15 per cylinder Thus the actual figures of retail prices for the three commodities in Delhi have reached Rs 22 84 (a rise of five per cent from Rs 21 52) per litre in the case of petrol, Rs 10 34 (a rise of 26 per cent from Rs 8 18) per litre in the case of diesel, and Rs 135 95 (a rise of 12 per cent from Rs 118 80) per cylinder in the case of cooking gas However, kerosene, the "fuel of the poor", has been spared

While making the announcement on September 1 of the oil price hike, as decided by the Union Cabinet following the conclusion of the special session of Parliament, Petroleum Minister Janeshwar Mishra also informed the Cabinet's decision to issue government bonds worth Rs 18,000 crores to oil companies (as loan to cover cumulative outstandings as on June 30, 1997) These steps were taken in an effort to bridge the deficit in the oil pool account which had accumulated to Rs 15,500 crores at the beginning of this financial year and touched Rs 18,200 crores by June 30, 1997

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According to the Minister, who characterised the measures as "painless surgery", these decisions are to annually provide Rs 9729 crores to the exchequer giving a Rs 1800 crore surplus per annum in the oil pool account The Cabinet has also agreed in principle to dismantle the administrative pricing mechanism (APM) and that is to be brought about in phases

What will be the effect of this price hike on the inflation rate? The direct and indirect effect of this hike is expected to lead to a 2-2 5 per cent rise in the inflation rate as petroleum products enjoy an eight per cent weightage in the wholesale price index Official sources predictably place the impact of the hike on the wholesale price index (WPI) as marginal—being of the order of 0 74 per cent This claim, of course, is open to question on the basis of past experience

Nonetheless, it is true that since the inflation rate dropped to a record low of 3 75 per cent—the lowest in 11 years—as on August 16, this was the most opportune time to go ahead with the oil price hike

At the same time it would be foolhardy not to take note of the dissenting voices within the UF as well as outside the ruling conglomerate The Left parties, which had put up stiff opposition to the move to raise the prices of petroleum products, are on a strong wicket when they contend that the step would impose additional burden on the people in general As has been already reported, in view of the hike in the price of diesel there is now a distinct possibility of truckers increasing freight charges thereby pushing up the prices of all goods Naturally the ordinary man will be more hardpressed to make his both ends meet To that extent the criticism is valid and the Petroleum Minister's rhetorical assertion of "painless surgery" has little substance

But the basic question is was there any alternative

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to the price hike? Some suggestions from the side of the Left could have been explored by the Gujral Government One of these was to raise the excise duty on diesel cars to discourage avoidable diesel consumption by luxury vehicles The Cabinet has agreed to review the excise duty on such cars, but a decision to increase the duty has not been taken

Yet what needs to be understood is the reason for the country reaching such a pass on the oil front About five-six years ago oil used to cost 12 dollars a barrel Today this figure has jumped to 23-24 dollars a barrel While going for massive oil imports the authorities have refrained from boosting domestic oil production, rather the ONGC has been starved of resources with proven oilfields being handed over to foreign companies However, what is being missed is that besides their easy access to the Middle East oil the Western oil companies have found adequate sources of cheap oil with the availability of the rich oil reserves in Central Asia they can exploit to their benefit, and hence development of oilfields in India does not figure in their list of priorities

That the consequence of this strategy—also a product of the 'globalisation' syndrome—runs counter to the whole perspective of building a self-reliant base for our economy does not bear elaboration as it is as transparent as daylight

But in the circumstances the argument of some price hike to meet the oil pool deficit cannot be summarily brushed aside The government must get its revenue from somewhere Nonetheless, the oil price hike perhaps was not imperative if the UF with Chidambaram's stewardship of the Finance Ministry had not given up its other sources of revenue as seen from the waiving of taxes the substantial reductions in Income Tax as well as the Capital Gains Tax The Left parties' objection to the oil price hike has its merits no doubt, but it sounds hollow precisely because this approach of tax waiving—based on Manmohanomics and pursued with vigour by Chidambaram—had not met with active resistance from their side in the Budget debate

The whole issue has, therefore, to be viewed in its entirety And while doing so it must be underscored that radical restructuring of the petroleum sector, now being mooted, has every potentiality of spelling disaster The policy of total dependence on the speculative forces of the global marketplace has its own logic to which one can cast a Nelson's eye only at one's peril

September 3 S C

Debating National Issues beyond Party Lines

KULDIP NAYAR

Politicians are at their best when not playing politics They speak, behave and act differently They give the impression that they can rise above petty or party considerations to point out what ails the nation

The four-day debate in Parliament shows that when the pull of politics is absent, members are inferior to none They are seen engrossed not in manoeuvres to capture power but in constructive thinking for the country

Lok Sabha Speaker P A Sangma should be congratulated on the special session of Parliament It was a difficult task but Parliament saw no reason why it could not pull it off The awe in which it was held had diminished Its sessions, awaited with great interest once, hardly created a ripple At best, it was part of a reassuring routine

Most debates had ceased to be relevant for, usually, the policies discussed had already been decided on without members being consulted The programmes put before the House lacked content The way the Minister for Parliamentary Affairs had to labour to finalise the agenda for a session made him appear to be scraping the bottom of the barrel There were plaintive calls to Ministries for topics and items pending from earlier sessions so that there was enough to fill the agenda paper To quote an official, "Every time (a topic had to be chosen) it was a feat of jugglery"

Strangely, the exercise that the Speaker made MPs go through was not undertaken earlier By doing it now, Parliament has substantially restored its image and people's faith in the system, which has increasingly been a question mark People are finding the task daunting and the MPs wanting But both Houses have acquitted themselves well Members of different ideologies appear to have agreed on the basic problems

The suggestions were many The government will probably take up the thread from where MPs left off But this may be easier if the task is not left in the hands of bureaucrats and if Parliament's Standing Committees do not feel helpless about the implementation of their own recommendations

Over the years, effective dissent within the administration has been smothered, followed by a general erosion of democratic values High-handed and arbitrary actions are carried out with impunity The nation is at a loss for directions and to grasp the implications of the actions of the government and its functionaries

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THE MPs' speeches are all right as far as they go But what do we do about tyrants who have sprung up at all levels? Their claim to authority is largely based on proximity to the seats of power The parties in power in the States encourage them because they form the cadres The menace they represent has to be seen to be believed

Yet if the nation is to preserve the fundamental values of a democratic society, every citizen must display a degree of vigilance and willingness to sacrifice Without the awareness of what is right and a desire to act accordingly, there may be no realisation of what is wrong This happened during the Emergency, when the dividing line between right and wrong, moral and immoral ceased to exist We have a long way yet to go to restore it

Essentially, it has been misuse of power by those who run the government Their *zulum*—and interference—has smudged democratic governance It is time to devise a mechanism to ensure that acts which confer power on rulers and public servants are reviewed periodically They interfere with the citizens' everyday life

An enactment, once it enters the statute book, should not be allowed to be forgotten Its operation should be constantly reviewed There should be built-in provisions to remind framers and public servants exercising authority under the statute that periodical reviews by the legislature is necessary so that the aims of the law are not perverted

The political system given us by the Constitution contemplates parties with different political ideologies administering the affairs of the Central and State Governments It is necessary for territorial, political and economic integrity to ensure that the factors which contribute to it are continuously strengthened

One such factor, and a very important and decisive one, is the body of public servants, particularly those at the decision-making levels belonging to different disciplines and functioning in the States and at the Centre If basic unity and territorial integrity is to be emphasised politically, it is imperative to ensure that officials are governed by one single consideration the promotion of public well-being through the upholding of the fundamentals of the Constitution and the rule of law

If officials on the one side and politicians on the other do not limit their areas of operation to the accepted and acknowledged fields, this nation cannot remain safe for democracy Unless this realisation dawns on the government and the people, all talk of cleanliness is futile

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MANY people believe that there should be a national government to deal with the problems and pressures that are piling up on the country This is not possible for ideological reasons What is possible is a national policy Certain problems should be kept above party considerations If the discussion in Parliament has made MPs think on those lines, it has been a great achievement Otherwise, it has been a futile exercise

The Opposition will make Parliament more purposeful but its eyes are mainly stuck on newspaper headlines It pursues no subject diligently or doggedly, much less study it in depth Even when the government is caught on the wrong foot, it is let off because of lack of preparation or because some other Opposition member has got hold of a subject that he cannot wait to bring up

There is no dearth of skeleton in the government's cupboard What the Opposition lacks is persistence The thrill of exposing a scandal, and the attention a particular party or person can get by making it public, makes members flit about from one topic to another They seem to think that a shouting match or a dharna in the House will get more notice in the newspapers than a well-reasoned speech

If the system is to be made safe for our children, MPs, MLAs and Panchayat members, alongside bureaucrats, must give a better account of themselves by standing up for the basic values of an honest and efficient administration

If a democratic heritage is to be bequeathed to future generations, we should want the truth once again to be enshrined in its legitimate place in the social, economic and political scheme of things There is nothing unattainable or profound in this It is a simple human message As Robert Frost said "Most of the change we think we see in life is due to truth being in or out of favour" ■

Sanjoy Ghose, ULFA and the Media

USHA RAI

If the Sanjoy Ghose abduction story hit the headlines and stayed on the front pages of the newspapers, initially in Assam and subsequently in several national dailies, it was because the media was extremely sensitive and, more important, supportive of the young social activist who held out a beacon of hope for the poorest in the marooned island of Majuli in Assam

With almost an abduction every second day, primarily for ransom, by the ULFA and the Bodos, the State's reactions have been by and large lethargic and the media relegates the story to a few paragraphs But it was the first time that a social activist had been picked up and it sent shock waves through the pulverised people of the State

Terrorism had taken a diabolic turn by picking up someone who was 5' 3", soft-spoken, ate one meal a day for he wished to identify with the poor and wanted to combat militancy (young people taking up the gun because of lack of employment and opportunity to make something of their lives) with development

In the first six months of the year the ULFA had made some Rs 30 crores from Lakhimpur and Majuli alone, a fair mount of it district rural development money, the Jorhat Police Superintendent had pointed out The AVARD was willy-nilly questioning the use of money meant for development and this was not liked by the ULFA or the contractors who paid them handsome protection money

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THE fact that the AVARD (Association for Voluntary Action in Rural Development)-NE was having problems with the militants and the contractors was well known to people like L C Jain, George Verghese, Tripathi, the President of the AVARD, Dr Kamla Chowdhury, one of the Directors of the National Foundation of India which was providing some financial assistance to Ghose's team, to Ghose's father, Shankar Ghose, Executive Director of the NFI Some of the senior bureaucrats in Dispur, who had got to know and like Sanjoy, also knew about his problems While Sanjoy's father was keen that he pull out of Assam, the old Gandhians of AVARD advised him to tread warily

The AVARD-NE team in fact had a public meeting at Majuli on June 1 where a vote of confidence was sought There was overwhelming support from various groups who said the AVARD-NE should forgive the young, disgruntled insurgents and continue with their good work So the 19-member AVARD team stayed on confident that the saner elements in Majuli would protect them

The media in Assam, by and large, failed to pick up these early signs of tension and the trouble that was brewing But when Ghose was picked up, the media in Assam—and Jorhat in particular—was fantastic The *Janmabhoomi* group of papers and *Clarion* from Jorhat had the story on the front pages for over a month Public ire was unparalleled Support for his release poured in from all over and some journalists from Guwahati rushed down to Majuli for investigative, field-level reports There was tremendous pressure on the government and the Army for his release

Some newspapers in Assam are in fact fronts for the ULFA. *Pratidin* and *Amor Asom* are two of them The ULFA's viewpoint is invariably reflected in these newspapers A BBC correspondent in Calcutta too is in close touch with the ULFA leaders and gets exclusive interviews with people like Paresh Barua, commander-in-chief of the ULFA Through him other BBC correspondents have been taken to the ULFA camps in Bhutan and sent out stories that try to win support for the underground movement and the ideology of the insurgents

Parents and relatives of those picked up by the ULFA run to these people begging them to plead the case of their loved ones with the ULFA leaders So these journalists have acquired larger-than-life-size images and enormous egos In fact every time the ULFA wants to communicate, it rings up chosen journalists and presents its point of view

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HOWEVER, Ghose's abduction was condemned by all newspapers All Jorhat papers and many Guwahati papers carried front-page edits It is, therefore, difficult to understand how a media that was so clued in could so blindly accept the innumerable contradictory statements on the 'death' 'killing' of Ghose

Between July 4, when Ghose was abducted, and August 5, Sanjoy was killed at least thrice as per statements issued by the ULFA, the Army and the police in Jorhat All these killings made screaming banner headlines in the Assam papers The media went to town and hammered home his death without asking

(Continued on page 32)

Diana Frances Spencer : Some Reflections

OBSERVER

The tragic death of Diana Frances Spencer, the Princess of Wales, with her latest boyfriend companion of Egyptian descent following a car crash in a Paris tunnel running along the Seine River at the Pont de L'alma bridge just north of the Eiffel Tower shortly after midnight of August 30-31 has hit the headlines the world over It is primarily the stunning news of the tragedy which has given it such a widespread international coverage although it is pointless to underline that without the celebrity status of Diana its impact on the media would not have been as powerful as it has been across the globe

No doubt Diana's personal attributes coupled with intimate involvement in charitable enterprises in aid of deprived children, AIDS victims and all those innocents suffering from landmine accidents in different continents have been no less responsible as a significant contributory factor on this score (One should not, however, be oblivious of Prince Charles' humanitarian concerns as well, whether related to education or ecology, even if his appeal is more to the intellect unlike Diana's, nonetheless, there is no gainsaying that her utterances and observations coming straight from the heart left a deeper impress on the public mind winning in the process wider acclaim)

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INDEED the glamour and glitz surrounding Diana apart, her tormented family life as the divorced wife of the heir to the royal throne lent her a unique aura, partly spontaneous and partly cultivated, and this assumed a new dimension in her untimely exit from the world stage It is natural, therefore, that public attention is focussed now on how far the paparazzi —the commercial photographers hounding her for several years—went in hastening her end by trying to intrude into her private life (though the grief over her death cannot conceal the fact that she herself had at times used them for her own publicity and in her selfish interest) Yet the paparazzi do deserve the criticism and attack they are being subjected to at present—doubtless the sharpest in recent years As one Indian daily aptly captioned its frontpage report on the tragedy, "Vultures Chase Diana to Death" (though, ironically, the same publication had no compunction in carrying, only recently, photos of Diana made available by the same 'Peeping Tom' photographers thus betraying its readiness to patronise such intrusion into the privacy of an individual presumably to meet the requirements of the market in Britain, if not India!) However, what *The Times of India* has editorially observed on September 2 merits reproduction in full as it brilliantly exposes the behaviour of influential—yet irresponsible—sections of the media with exceptional eloquence and extraordinary candour

> The prurient interest in the private lives of public personalities like Diana, as evidenced not only in the West but also in ostensibly culturally remote countries, is a hunger that feeds on itself growing more voracious in the process till it consumes the object of its morbid desire The media obsequies attendant on Diana's death underline this point with deadly irony The untimely death of any individual is poignant, a sombre reminder of our common mortality But too fulsome an expression of grief can be as distasteful and suspect as callous indifference All the more so in the present case where the unfolding, inexorable tragedy that finally culminated in a Parisian tunnel was at each stage of the drama largely scripted in the ink of yellow journalism The unseemly and disproportionate publicity which Diana so long tried to flee has caught up with a vengeance to show that even death is no insurance against the invasion of privacy That is the final twist of the knife

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WHILE recalling the Princess today one cannot forget her explosively frank interview to the BBC before her divorce bringing out her trauma in the royal household and thus unmasking the British monarchy and its abominable hypocrisy It was that interview which had turned the 'shy Di' into a veritable dynamite

In this very context and amidst the overwhelming grief far beyond the borders of Britain as a result of her shocking and untimely demise one finds the following lines appearing in *The Asian Age* editorial of September 1 most appropriate and noteworthy as one of the best tributes to the deceased who eventually did prove to be a young woman of substance

> Princess Diana died suddenly, leaving her children and many unaccomplished tasks behind her She did, in the process of living a life she believed in, expose much of the British hypocrisy surrounding the carefully preserved monarchy She refused to conform, she acted as she thought and felt and not as she ought to which was basically the reason for her estrangement with Buckingham Palace and all that it implies She mixed with the Asians and the Arabs with the same ease as she did with the nobility of Britain, and perhaps it was this one fact that endeared her to the racial minorities of that country After all, Dodi Al-Fayed's father who is the owner of Harrods in London has still not been given citizenship rights by the British Government Princess Diana was able to turn up her nose at such formalities and when her legend—for she seems to have become one in her death—is written, hopefully, her indifference towards and complete disregard of royal British niceties will be remembered ■

IRA Bill and the Autonomous Finance Ministry

NINAN KOSHY

While the debate on and the withdrawal of the Insurance Regulatory Bill in the first week of August raise questions about parliamentary processes, the reactions from the Finance Ministry and the big business inside and outside and country raise important issues about economic policy-making

"I am here to reform," the Finance Minister said to press reporters "What reform will be there if I am unable to open up insurance even partially?", he asked He evidently took it all very personally

Chidambaram went to the Prime Minister and asked him "Are you for reform?" The Prime Minister is reported to have said that he is pro-reform

Our Finance Minister is obviously talking not about financial reforms in general but about the Reform dictated by the IMF and supervised by the WTO Those who are against the Reform have no place in his scheme of things Hence the very courteous question to the Prime Minister

"I am here to reform" reminds one of a statement by Mrs Margaret Thatcher in 1979 when she said that the Old Testament prophets did not say "Brothers, let us have a consensus " They had faith and asked others to follow That was what she was also doing, Thatcher claimed

This self-understanding of the Finance Minister and his Ministry about their messianic role and special mandate apparently do not come from the United Front or its Common Minimum Programme (CMP) but from other sources beyond and above

The keynote of the economic policies in the CMP is that "growth with social justice will be the motto of the United Front Government" The CMP does not even refer to the fact that a new economic policy had come into force in 1991 It is true that the CMP says under 'Infrastructure' that

> the UF government will carry out further reforms of the financial sector so that the flow of both domestic and foreign funds to the infrastructure sector is enhanced substantially

The former Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, had claimed that there was a national consensus behind the new economic policy and that the reforms were irreversible The verdict in the elections disproved these claims It is true that there is a consensus among the elites in this country about the national bourgeoisie's willingness to abandon an independent economic policy in favour of full integration with imperialist capital The Finance Minister is attempting to consolidate and expand this consensus

The author was formerly the Director, International Affairs, World Council of Churches and a Visiting Fellow, Human Rights Programme, Harvard Law School

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It is not difficult to trace the sources from which the new self-understanding of the Finance Ministry comes In many countries under the IMF-World Bank regime it has been noticed that among the significant elements to the management of the reform process is the institutionalisation of assumption of responsibility for economic policy by a Finance Ministry that claims autonomy This actually means the delegation of responsibility for economic policy-making to technocrats in the Finance Ministry These technocrats as a result come to be viewed as having attributes that are above and superior to those of political leaders

This is what is happening in India too Economic policy-making has increasingly become an aggressively technological exercise The marginalisation of the Planning Commission in policy-making relative to the economic bureaucracy in the finance and related Ministries should not go unnoticed It should be underlined that the economic bureaucracy consists mainly of technocrats with professional background in the World Bank and IMF, with unabashed commitment to neo-colonial liberalism and free market They understand policy-making as a predominantly technological choice They think in terms of technical solutions to the problems they perceive in earlier policies The social costs of policy changes are not their concern

The implications of this self-understanding of the Finance Ministry are serious As Supriya Roy Chowdhry pointed out in an article "On Markets and Democracy" (*The Hindu*, May 10),

> In this context a central question that we need to ask is in what ways the transition to a market-dominated economy changes the contours of critical public debate, impacts upon the empowerment of popular sectors and ultimately shapes the functioning limits of democratic institutions

There is a tendency that takes economic policy somewhat outside the bounds of critical public debate It is this which has detracted from the substantive democratic content of the process of economic policy-making

Therefore, it was not surprising that the big business in India asked for a special session of Parliament to pass their 'dream Budget' at a time when the government was in a limbo after the Congress withdrew its support to the United Front Ministry This was an extraordinary demand which reinforced the view that economic policy should be insulated from political contention The assumption was that the Budget had already been 'approved' by those inside and outside who mattered and all what was needed was a rubber stamp from Parliament To them the Budget is a technical product made by internationally qualified experts and is independent of the political processes in the country The fact that the Finance Minister enthusiastically endorsed the proposal showed his conviction about such economic policy-making It should also be recalled that before the Budget had been passed and when there was political uncertainty the Finance Ministry had begun issuing notifications regarding proposals in the Budget and the Finance Secretary assured a business conference in Bangalore that all promises given in the Budget would be kept

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THIS is not the place to go into the merits and demerits of the Insurance Regulatory Bill But one thing deserves special mention Much has been made of the delay in the opening up of health insurance in view of the withdrawal of the Bill Whose health insurance is the Finance Minister talking about? The government has focussed on the needs of the rich and the middle classes and ignored the rural areas and the weaker sections The Malhotra Committee had recommended the rejuvenation of postal insurance towards this end but this has been ignored by the authorities And this is a government which every year is spending less and less on social sectors even when the allocation appears to be increasing

Let us look at some of the global reactions Global increasingly refers only to the global market and the political arrangements for it called 'global governance'

The US Deputy Secretary of Treasury, Laurence Summers, said that the withdrawal of the Bill which would have opened the country's insurance sectors partially to the private investors was "bad news for the world and bad news for India too" He was fair enough to admit that it was primarily bad news for the world which means, of course, the global market and only secondarily for India

He said it was a serious setback for economic reform in India "which should now set firm dates for the next series of reforms" Chidambaram may comply with this demand but even he may find it difficult to agree when Summers says that

> India in 1997 resembles the reforming countries of eastern and central Europe

At least the World Bank and IMF still show the courtesy to distinguish developing countries like India from the 'transition economies' of former socialist countries

That the US and other global players can ask and get 'firm dates' from Indian Reformers was all too evident during the week the IRA Bill was moved and withdrawn

Business Times of August 7 carried the news item "Insurance Bill's 'tryst with destiny' fails to take place"

> The withdrawal of the IRA Bill on Wednesday shocked domestic industry and foreign investors who were keenly awaiting the opening up of India's insurance sector There was probably no better place to gauge their mood than a high-profile international conference on insurance organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) here on Wednesday Nearly 500 delegates, many of them from top international insurance companies including Commercial Union, Allianz AG Holding, General Accident Insurance and Lloyd Thompson, were discussing their potential role in a liberated insurance framework when they heard the news of the Bill being dropped

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WHAT is significant is the timing of the conference It was planned to coincide with the passage of the Bill the announcement of which would have been the high point of the conference That moment was to be Big Insurance's tryst with India's destiny

To hold an international conference to coincide with the passage of a Bill on a particular day by a Parliament which has earned a reputation for not keeping any schedule of legislation is audacious But the organisers knew that Parliament would be asked to pass the Bill that particular day Yes, a 'firm date' had been set by the Reformers and communicated to their masters

"It is an anti-climax I am highly disappointed,' said George Otto of Allianz AG India "We were under the impression that passage of this Bill in Parliament is 'a *fait accompli'* " 'A *fait accompli*' is something already accomplished He meant that the

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Universal Primary Education and the PM's Agenda

RM PAL

In a seminar organised by Dalit students and research scholars of Jawaharlal Nehru University on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of India's independence, while referring to the dismal picture in the field of literacy among SC/STs this writer quoted the second part of the memorable 'Tryst with Destiny' speech of Pandit Nehru in the Constituent Assembly on the midnight of August 14-15, 1947

> The achievement we celebrate today is but a step, an opening of opportunity, to the great triumphs and achievements that await us (Our task includes) the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity

Professor Rajni Kothari (who was one of the participants) commented that this second part was not meant to be implemented! In any case, the most important social welfare programme, elementary education, has not yet been implemented

Successive governments since 1947 have totally ignored elementary education—non-implementation of which is, and will continue to be, at the root of all violations of human rights Also no development of any kind, including economic, is possible without implementing this programme It needs hardly any emphasis that illiteracy has many adverse effects relating to the freedom and welfare of the people, social change, health care, large-scale female infanticide, abysmal poverty, economic disparity, alarming rise in population, social evils like discrimination based on caste and sex, child labour (India contributes the largest share in the child labour force—it is all the more tragic that almost ninety per cent of child workers employed in the notorious match factories in Sivakasi in Tamil Nadu are girls)

It is in this context that Prime Minister Gujral's August 15 speech from the Red Fort is refreshing, as it marks a departure from the past While exhorting the values of scepticism and perpetual enquiry, he announced his agenda in which he put gender equality, women, the girl child, and universal compulsory primary education first on the list of his priorities He also announced that a new national policy on population control is being formulated This too is intimately connected with literacy

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It was also refreshing to hear the Prime Minister propounding the theory that no development is possible without introducing universal primary education No other Prime Minister has ever emphasised this aspect and has not given top priority to this all-important social welfare programme In fact no government in our country since 1947 has even recognised the fact that universal primary education is a social welfare programme, and no government including the United Front Government has put any emphasis in practice on universal education

It may also be noted, with a sense of relief, that while announcing that primary education will now be part of fundamental rights, the Prime Minister did not endorse the recommendation of the State Education Ministers' Committee that it will also be part of fundamental duty

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WHETHER or not Gujral's announcement is also not meant to be implemented, time alone will tell Meanwhile human rights groups will welcome his announcement and it is hoped Gujral and his government will muster the political courage and will, which has been lacking since 1947, to put his announcement into practice Gujral will, it is hoped, succeed in changing the mindset of many of his colleagues, including that of the Planning Commission (for whom the unwritten policy and thinking is that illiteracy cannot be eradicated unless poverty is eliminated—a classic example of putting the cart before the horse!), the political bosses of the States, and a large section of bureaucrats who put this programme last on the list of priorities They must be *told*, over and over again, that in the field of literacy we are behind even the poorest of the poor, sub-Saharan Africa

It may also be noted with regret that the national press while reporting the Prime Minister's speech did not highlight the subjects to which he gave primacy and priority In fact, those who did not listen to him on the TV/Radio, would not know from newspaper reports about his priorities The

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SPECIAL ARTICLE

The Bottomline is Café au Lait

D BANDYOPADHYAY

Fifty years ago India became independent. The colonial power extracted its price for its departure by partioning the country on an irrational and totally untenable "two-nation" theory. In spite of the creation of Pakistan, India today has the second largest Muslim population in the world next to Indonesia. All communities are living peacefully and enjoying equal opportunity under the protection of rule of law and fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution of India. This fact by itself invalidates the "two-nation" theory.

That we have an uninterrupted functioning democracy for fifty years with an independent judiciary, free press and freedom of speech and expression, armed forces firmly under constitutional civilian authority, regular and frequent free and fair elections to the State Assemblies and national Parliament, a non-partisan bureaucracy is a significant achievement. There was an aberration when Internal Emergency was declared in the mid-seventies. But that was a short-lived affair. Democracy bounced back as soon as it was lifted. That the then powers-that-be tried to legitimise this aberration *ex post facto* through a general election to Parliament showed that democracy had taken roots. Even the aspiring Czarina had to submit herself to the electoral process to get a moral sanction of her political delinquency. She lost the election. She bowed out of power. The fifty-year-old Indian democracy is a political wonder compared to what had been happening in various neighbouring countries in the Asian continent. And the wonder of wonders is the unbroken twenty-year rule by the CPI-M dominated Left Front in West Bengal.

The term "Communist" even today either evokes adulation or produces vitriol. Sidney and Beatrice Webb acclaimed the erstwhile Soviet Union as a "New Civilisation", while Ronald Reagan condemned it as an "evil empire". To a much lesser extent, the Left Front Government (LFG) in West Bengal also generates similar contradictory responses. Hence it is a bit difficult to make an objective appreciation of a rare phenomenon of a Left Front dominated by the CPI-M continuing in power for 20 years, renewing its popular mandate regularly every five years through general elections. Literature on this unusual political event often betrays a high degree of subjectivity. Those who try to explain the consecutive electoral success of the Left Front since 1977 as a product of perfection of the "art of rigging" know very well the hollowness of their assertion. They do so mainly to deflect criticism about their own electoral failure. On the other hand, the literature also contains a lot of sychophantic babble which strains the credulity of a neutral observer. There are, however, a few studies which have attempted to make a fairly objective analysis of the correlation of social and political forces to explain this unique occurrence of a Marxist Communist-led Left group of parties being in power in a State for such a long time in a country where the forces of the Right are so dominant not only in other States but also at the Centre.

The author is a former Secretary, Revenue and a former Secretary, Rural Development in the Government of India. He also served as the Executive Director, Asian Development Bank, Manila and was the Chairman, Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta. He played a vital role under West Bengal's former Land and Land Revenue Minister, Benoy Chowdhury, in implementing 'Operation Barga', one of the pioneering achievements of the Left Front Government of West Bengal.

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THE most commendable achievement of the LFG was the recording of the share-croppers in the record of rights through the famous 'Operation Barga'. There is a lot of misunderstanding about it elsewhere in India. Many people think that tenants for the first time got recorded in West Bengal. That is not correct. A slight looking back into the agrarian history will clarify the issue.

Under the old Bengal Tenancy Act—a remarkable piece of legislation which brought about peace in the rural Bengal Presidency—a tenant was broadly defined as anyone who cultivated the land of another in consideration of paying rent either in kind or in cash or in combination of both. The Act also defined different grades of tenants for protecting them against eviction and rack renting. There were "settled" raiyats, "occupancy" raiyats, and different layers of "under raiyats" For the proper implementation of the Act massive settlement operations were undertaken throughout the Bengal Presidency which recorded the rights and obligations of different tiers of intermediaries and raiyats and any other interest holders in land During these settlement operations many British Settlement Officers found that the category of tenants called *bargadars/adhiars/bhag-chasis* were not clearly mentioned among various categories of tenants listed in the Act But since they fulfilled the basic ingredients of the general definition of a tenant, many of the settlement officers recorded them as crop sharing tenants—under the general category of tenants who paid rent only in kind

The zamindar groups which included various layers of intermediaries—the number of which was as high as 64 in the old Buckerganj district (now in Bangladesh)—felt quite disturbed by this interpretation of definition of tenants by some of the liberal British Settlement Officers belonging to the then Indian Civil Service So they started mounting pressure on the then Bengal Government to bring about an amendment to the BT Act to exclude "share-croppers" specifically from the definition of tenant Their argument was that the BT Act did not clearly include "share-croppers" as tenant when it did so for so many other categories Secondly, the "little" land that they kept for "personal cultivation" were becoming encumbered by declaring share-croppers as tenants Many of these zamindars were also involved in the Congress politics The government accepted the policy of appeasing zamindars and their cronies by amending the BT Act by inserting a proviso to the definition of tenants that anyone who cultivated the land of another as a "share-cropper" *adhiar/bhag-chasi* would not be treated as a tenant under the BT Act This was a highly retrograde amendment to the BT Act done in 1929 under the pressure of zamindars some of whom were staunch Congressmen

When the zamindari was abolished and all legal tenants became owners of their tenanted lands on the implementation of the West Bengal Estates Acquisition Act in 1955 only the share-croppers were left out Hence, the general perception in many parts of the country and also among a section of the academia that tenants for the first time got security under 'Operation Barga' is not correct Millions, constituting the majority of tenants under the BT Act, became owners of their own land But the most vulnerable and exploited segment was left unprotected The number of *bargadars* extrapolated from the figures given by the Floud Commission of 1940 would be between 18 and 22 lakhs One could take for operational purpose a figure of 20 lakhs which would be fairly reasonable After the Tebhaga movement of mid- and late forties, laws were enacted for the protection of *bargadars* Unfortunately, no one thought of removing that proviso in the BT Act which was still prevalent and which denied tenantship to share-croppers This was mainly because the post-independent Government of West Bengal basically represented the same class interests which deprived share-croppers of their tenancy right in 1929

Land reform under the aegis of the Left parties took place in two phases During the two spells of the United Front Government of 1967 and 1969-70, a major effort was made to break the concentration of land holding not only among the erstwhile zamindars but also of the newly emerging jotedar class, under the leadership of the late Hare Krishna Konar About one million acres of good agricultural land was vested in the State entirely by the quasi-judicial process with supportive mobilisational role of the peasants' organisations that broke the monopoly of social, political and economic power of landed gentry in rural West Bengal which had had a long-term beneficial impact on the rural economy and the political power structure Two main groups which took leading roles were "share-croppers" and "agricultural workers" On their oral evidence, phoney documents were disbelieved and *benami* lands were detected and vested in the State After the dismissal of the second UF Government, terror was unleashed on these groups, particularly on the share-croppers Large-scale eviction took place apart from subjecting them to physical violence culminating in liquidation in some cases Thus when the LFG came to power in June 1977, there was a feeling of apathy among the share-croppers to come forward and provide evidence for vesting of land on the basis of family ceiling which was introduced in 1972 during the Congress regime

The main reason why the share-croppers suffered during the seventies was that hardly anyone was recorded Hence, if they were evicted they could not establish their claim in the appropriate forum as against vehement opposition of the landowners who declared them as agricultural workers who were paid in kind No amount of political exhortation could exorcise the apathy of the share-croppers unless they had something legally acceptable as proof of their being share-croppers Agenda No 1 of the LFG, therefore, had to be the registration of share-croppers But if the usual revenue court procedure were to be followed advantage would have been with the landowners Hence the procedure was drastically changed This was done on the suggestion of a peasant organisation activist, Sambhu Tudu, who suffered imprisonment without trial during the entire period of Emergency for his activism

Contrary to the popular belief and claims by many political intellectuals, 'Operation Barga' was thought of, planned and implemented between the middle of 1978 and first quarter of 1982 by the bureaucracy under the leadership of Benoy Chowdhury, the Minister of Land Reforms, and Jyoti Basu, the Chief Minister, who provided continuous support to overcome many a hurdle, both administrative and political The first panchayat under the LFG came into existence in early 1978 Panchayats coped with the devastating floods of September 1978 magnificently They were still finding their feet by the time the main thrust of the OB was over They did play a supportive role generally, though veiled opposition for the sake of protecting the interests of "widows, invalids and young" landowners had to be encountered in many places

An analysis of the class character of the 1978 panchayat members showed that agricultural labourers and share-croppers constituted less than five per cent of the total members Obviously, quite a few of the other 95 per cent were not mightily amused by the recording of share-croppers from whom they exacted undue surplus It was quite natural for them to try to subvert the OB to protect their class interest In spite of some hiccups around 1 2 million share-croppers were recorded in three-and-a-half years flat under the massive OB—an achievement unsurpassed in almost nine decades of operation of the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1884 The LFG can legitimately take pride in this singular administrative, economic and political accomplishment It immediately brought about the much needed peace and tranquillity in the countryside—a pre-condition for economic development

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ANOTHER major achievement of the LFG in its final term of office was the introduction of panchayats in 1978 When panchayats were in a state of decadence as described by the Ashok Mehta Committee, the LFG held panchayat elections in June 1978, after a lapse of more than a decade and a half It anticipated the Ashok Mehta Committee Report in allowing political parties to put up candidates under their own symbols The CPI-M had always been very wary of Indira Gandhi's political moves Shrewd political analysts that they were, the CPI-M and other compatriot parties who were partners in the earlier UF of the late sixties anticipated the triumphant political resurrection of Indira Gandhi after a short and not so dignified interlude of Janata experience at the Centre They expected a severe backlash from her as it had happened in 1967 and 1970 Therefore, without losing any time they thought of digging in in the rural areas by revitalising the dead panchayats through fresh elections and endowing them with some administrative powers This they did sincerely and with a degree of aplomb All these they did for political necessity and survival long before Rajiv Gandhi's 64th Amendment

In fact Rajiv Gandhi, no friend of the LFG, while searching for an alternative to the stipendiary bureaucracy for rural development activities was deeply impressed by the West Bengal and Karnataka model of panchayats Theoretically and legally the Karnataka model was far superior to the West Bengal panchayats But that system lasted only for one term With the overthrow of the Hegde Government all the panchayats were dissolved And that was practically the end of the Karnataka experiment But in West Bengal panchayats have survived for nearly twenty years with regular elections on political lines and have really established themselves as the integral part of the governance of the State, both in reality and in popular psyche

An important feature of panchayats in West Bengal is the transfer of power from the "uppers" in the rural area to the "middles" and "lower middles" This has been possible because of the first phase of land reforms in the late sixties which broke the concentration of land-holdings Even during the restoration of early and mid-seventies they did not get back their lost land as these were all legally vested and most of them stood the scrutiny of courts of different levels The power shifted from the rentier class to the producer class which had beneficial impact on agricultural growth

Yet another significant accomplishment of the LFG is the acceleration of the growth rate in agriculture For nearly eighty years from 1901 to 1981 agriculture stagnated in West Bengal with the rate of growth generally varying between 0 and one per cent But since the mid-eighties—1985 onwards—West Bengal is experiencing a rate of growth between five and six per cent per year It is a significant breakthrough

There is a controversy among the econometricians and statisticians regarding the actual growth rate Some put it at around four per cent The government claims it to be around six per cent By and large there is a measure of agreement that the rate of growth is nearer five than four A sustained five per cent rate of growth of agriculture for a decade and more is quite a good performance by any standard

A number of scholars have commented that the surge in agricultural production in West Bengal has been the result of concentrated application of technological inputs, particularly minor irrigation John Harris wrote

> The point that I think does emerge is that the successful change which is observed (in the village) cannot be shown to have followed at all directly from the agrarian reform programme of the Left Front Government

I would contest this proposition No one denies the impact of technology on production and productivity One would also accept the positive impact of favourable terms of trade for agriculture on total production But biochemical technology, though scale neutral, is not resource or motivation neutral In the absence of land reform the traditional landed elements who have access to resources could use new technology In the non-land reform area the spread effect of new technology had been limited The informed researchers' opinion is that the relative growth of foodgrain production is higher in West Bengal than in North Bihar and Eastern UP, though all the three areas are experiencing accelerated growth Secondly, vested land which has been distributed (though in small parcels) among the landless and land-poor peasantry constitutes eight to nine per cent of the total arable area of the State The total area of land being under about 1 5 million the recorded share-croppers would be around 18 to 22 per cent of the arable land Thus 25 to 30 per cent of agricultural land which was being cultivated indifferently under various exploitative systems prior to land reforms is now being cultivated more efficiently and diligently, the impact of which on the total production cannot be insignificant Thirdly, as large segments of poverty groups are participating as core elements in the production process, the diffusion effect is much more marked in West Bengal than in North Bihar and Eastern UP Fourthly, since public investment in agriculture has been coming down all over India, the rate of growth of private investment has also slackened creating an adverse ambience for agricultural growth all over In contrast the West Bengal experience is slightly different Because of the first phase of land reform, panchayats have been under the control of the middle peasantry Middle peasants are productive agents and not parasitic rentiers They spend a significant portion of the enormous amount of money that they receive for wage employment schemes (earlier NREP/RLEGP and currently JRY, etc) for micro irrigation, water harvesting structure, soil conservation, watershed management, contour bunding and similar activities to enhance the productivity of soil They do so in their own class interest As these expenditures are shown under the head wage employment, no disaggregated figures of public investment in public works supportive of agriculture is available Thus a combination of favourable factors—(i) access to land gained by the poor through land reform, (ii) massive transfer of resources to the rural sector from the Sixth Plan onwards, through centrally sponsored poverty alleviation programmes and their utilisation by the panchayats dominated by productive agents for public works supportive of agriculture, and (iii) diffusion and acceptance by the poorer peasants alongwith others of biochemical technology created a sustainable boom in agriculture production, since the mid-eighties This is a major achievement of the LFG in West Bengal Poverty, both absolute and differential, still exists But visible signs of destitution are declining

The other significant success is the introduction of panchayats already referred to Whatever might be the political reasoning, there is no denying that there was an attempt to partially resolve the dichotomy of the Indian polity which had democracy at the Centre and the State level and untramelled autocracy of the stipendiary bureaucracy below the State level By devolving some functions hitherto exclusively reserved for the bureaucracy to the panchayats, the LFG did give the rural people a taste of self-governance An unfortunate natural disaster—a devastating flood in September 1978—in which most of the newly-elected panchayat members took active and sympathetic part in rescue and relief operations endeared the panchayat system and its members to the common people It roused the morale of the panchayats quite high which enabled them to tackle various other administrative and social problems with confidence and success

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THESE are all good points which need to be highlighted in any objective assessment of the LFG And all these were done in the flush of success in the first term of office of the LFG in 1977-82 Since then one notices waning of that extra enthusiasm, verve and deep concern for the people which so clearly distinguished the LFG from governments of other hues in other States and at the Centre Perhaps because of the unhappy experience of "gherao" in the labour front and some degree of militant mobilisational role of the peasant organisations which led to severe inter-party clashes for occupation of vested land ultimately resulting in the collapse of the second United Front Government, the LFG consciously eschewed the mobilisational line and deliberately adopted the policy of consensus and conciliation The compulsion of parliamentary politics, intense desire to remain in power by not confronting a not-so-friendly Central Government under Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi (1980-89), deliberate abandonment of the "class struggle" line of the earlier UF led to a dilution of revolutionary ardour and zeal Neil Webster noticed it as early as the late eighties and remarked in 1990

> Further consolidation of political power has necessitated a toning down of the revolutionary politics There has been a shift away from "Class Struggle" to institutional management This has avoided the danger of alienating a section of rich peasants It is a change that has defused tensions in agrarian relations and directed activism into institutional work

Some other sympathetic Western scholars also came to similar inference Kristen Westergaard (1988) stated

> In terms of popular participation framework it may be concluded that the poor are represented in the institution of power But by and large this representation has not resulted in any significant increase in their control over institutions

What attracted the attention of some Western scholars who had done considerable research in the area got fully corroborated by the findings of the Mukarji-Bandyopadhyay Report on West Bengal's Panchayats in 1993 It observed

> It seems, however, that the downward movement of power has remained arrested Power has yet to travel down to lower levels, the middle category, it looks, remains in firm control of the Panchayats The "lowers" will surely know what is good for them more accurately than any possible notion the "middles" may entertain on their behalf Therefore, conscious efforts need to be made by the political parties to ensure that the middle category does not become an impermeable layer preventing percolation of power to lower levels

This consolidation of the "middles" in the rural governance had both good and bad effects We have already mentioned about the good effects as to how the coalescing of the class interest of the "middles" for better agricultural production with that of the general interest of the State as a whole led to better utilisation of wage employment funds for creating public works in supporting agriculture The bad effect is that a few are cornering the benefits and enclassing themselves from the "middle" to the "upper" throwing further land reform out of the political agenda

That on the grounds of consensual and conciliatory politics, the LFG has decided as a matter of policy not to rock the boat violently is apparent in its actions and inactions The West Bengal Land Reform Act was amended radically after the LFG came to power with the objective of getting an additional half a million to three quarters of a million acres of land Nothing much has happened there In fact amendments have been made for dilution of some of the rigorous provisions To some in the LFG the now amended Land Reform Act is an embarrassment and to some others it is an impediment to "further progress" About 1 5 million share-croppers have been registered There is no thinking about conferment of ownership right on them, though it was recommended by the Floud Commission, more than half a century ago in 1940 The Land Reform Act made enabling provision for consolidation of poor men's holdings up to one hectare This would have enabled them to get optimal benefit from new technology Nothing has happened The same law provided for formation of cooperative service societies for the beneficiaries of land reforms and other poor peasants to have an institutional format for better extension service, support of inputs and credit, better marketing facilities and overall higher bargaining power as a group both in the social and economic arena The achievement here seems to be nil

Large-scale alienation of *barga* and patta lands has taken place in North Bengal for expansion of tea plantations No measure seems to have been taken either to restore the illegally alienated lands to their rightful owners or to regularise the tea plantations In the absence of either, the poor are suffering for which no succour is coming to them from anywhere including the panchayats The countryside is dominated by a new phenomenon called "mutuals" Mutual is an English word adopted in the colloquial language of rural West Bengal In its local nuance it means consensual agreement of unequal nature It is through such "mutuals" (local lingo) that about 40 to 50 per cent of registered share-croppers still receive 50 per cent of crop as against 75 per cent under the law It is through these "mutuals" that reverse tenancy leasing is taking place on a fairly large scale during the *rabi* and *boro* seasons And all such mutuals have the sanction of the panchayats and the Party apart from the contracting entities There is a serious regression taking place in the land reform front which seems to be no longer a matter of concern of the LFG

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ON the panchayats also the negative features are coming out rather sharply In the first place, no systematic devolution of powers and authorities has been done subsequent to the 73rd Amendment Of the 29 items mentioned in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution hardly anything substantial has been done Even where some subject has been given corresponding staff and budget have not been transferred Ministers aided and abetted by the bureaucracy (including technocracy) are resisting any real transfer of power In fact many were heard complaining that a strong measure of centralisation is going on in the name of decentralisation Panchayats do not control primary education There is a district committee outside the panchayat which does it Transport and communication as a subject belongs to panchayats nominally but the Regional Transport Authority rules the roost In a village there are 15 to 18 government functionaries doing or not doing any work Yet a Gram Panchayat has only a job assistant and a secretary to deal with or to keep account of 10 to 15 lakhs of rupees per year It seems that the narrow and sectional interests of the State Government employees are getting precedence over the interests of rural self-governance There is hardly any united fund for the panchayats As a result panchayats only perform agency functions of the centrally sponsored schemes The Mukarji-Bandyopadhyay Report observed

> When the panchayats first started there was a great deal of energy and zeal in evidence both amongst the elected members and the people The initial zest started fading after 1983 when the second panchayats were elected And with the coming of the third panchayats in 1988, it seems to have all but disappeared The innovative spirit of the early years is hardly to be seen The panchayats have become overly engrossed in routine work

In fact panchayats are turning out to be a set of elected bureaucracy appended loosely to the all-powerful stipendiary bureaucracy Panchayats have been mandated by the Constitution to "prepare plans for economic development and social justice" But all technical personnel, whether engineers or agronomists or doctors, function independently under their respective line directorates or departments In Kerala, Krishi Bhawans at the Gram Panchayat and Block Panchayat levels are adjuncts to Panchayat Bhawans In West Bengal under the World Bank's single line system, Block Agriculture Offices are on an average 1 5 kilometres away from Panchayat Samity Offices Panchayats have failed to bring about any order in the chaotic jungle of verticality The fault is not of the panchayats It lies with the LFG which failed to muster courage and strength to endow such powers and functions to the panchayats as to make them genuine institutions of participatory self-government

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IT is, however, in the social sector that the performance of the LFG leaves much to be desired Everywhere in the world any genuinely Leftist Government succeeded in eliminating illiteracy and common communicable diseases which tremendously improved the well-being of the population beyond what income measurement would indicate Unfortunately, in spite of 20 years of the uninterrupted rule these have not happened in West Bengal The impact of bureaucratisation of the panchayats and the lack of adequate sensitivity of the LFG on some of the social issues comes out clearly in some of the social indicators prepared by the UNDP in its latest report "India The Road to Human Development" presented at the India Development Forum, Paris, June 23-24, 1997 Both in Human Development Index and the Gender Development Index West Bengal's position is sixth with Kerala, Punjab, Maharashtra, Haryana, Gujarat above it This is something in which the LFG may not take much pride

Its performance in both health and education sectors is fairly miserable which one could not have expected after two decades of LF rule With the life expectancy of 61 5 years (at birth in 1989-93) West Bengal's position is eighth, below that of Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Punjab and Tamil Nadu The percentage of moderately and severely under-weight children in the rural areas is 60 4 per cent which is significantly higher than the national average of 55 9 per cent With the female-male ratio of 940 (1992-93) West Bengal stands 18th from the top and seventh from the bottom and below the national average of 944. One wonders what the Left-wing women's organisations which started in the mid-forties after the Great Bengal Famine have been doing all these days Obviously, being busy with some other work they did not find time to intervene on the crucial issue of "vanishing women" While in panchayats due to reservation representation of women is more than 33 33 per cent, in Parliament where there is no reservation, the percentage is merely 10 3 (per cent)

The LF on its own does not feel obliged to do anything positive for higher representation of women in Parliament That remains in spite of their so-called commitment for gender justice a playing field for the machos

The major morbidity prevalence rate is 6168 per 100,000 population in West Bengal This is not only much higher than the average for rural India of 4578, it is also significantly higher than the figures of Ashis Bose's "BIMARU" States The annual per capita personal cost is Rs 62 for fees and medicines for major morbidity This figure is not only significantly higher than national (rural) figure of Rs 49 but is also much higher than the corresponding figures of Haryana, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, NE States, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh These two figures corroborate the harrowing experience of any attempt to access public medical facility in the State Every newspaper carries some news or other of maltreatment of patients in government hospitals *The Statesman* of July 18, 1997 carried a news item captioned "Pregnant Woman Forced Out of Free Health Centre" Paban Rajbanshi, an agricultural worker, took his wife Phulan who was in acute labour pain to Gokarna Block Primary Health Centre and paid Rs 10 as "preliminary charges" for admission But the medical officer and the attendant refused to treat Phulan unless "fees" was paid Paban did not have money but promised to pay the fee after the doctor attended to his wife As he failed to pay, the doctor "literally dragged Phulan out of the labour room" and Phulan delivered a baby at the bus-stand The West Bengal Human Rights Commission observed

> Phulan Rajbanshi, a poor woman, was driven out of the health centre at odd hours of night under most trying conditions She delivered a few minutes later while waiting for a bus outside the centre Such an incident reflects very poorly on the quality of the hospital administration This shows the malaise plaguing the system

Yet panchayats would not be allowed any control or supervision over such medical centres as the doctors' association and employees' union oppose this move Paban had to run to Calcutta to approach the Human Rights Commission to get some psychological relief The public sector health facilities are in shambles

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In the field of education it is an equally sorry tale Today there is no centre of excellence under the control of the LFG in West Bengal The only two centres of excellence in the State are IIT Kharagpur and IIM Calcutta both being Central organisations, the State Government has no say Such an institute of eminence as the Presidency College has been systematically denuded of its excellence in the name of "de-elitism" It is the reign of mediocrity verging on inferiority which prevails in the higher education field The annual exodus of students from West Bengal for higher studies to the South and Delhi clearly indicates the disgraceful state of affairs here

One may contest these statements as utterly subjective So let us go into some quantities It was reported in the newspapers that 25,000 boys and girls who had passed the Secondary examinations (Class X) in 1997 would not get admission to Higher Secondary schools or colleges as there were no seats It was reported sometime ago that roughly 40 to 45 per cent of students coming out of elementary schools could not have got into any secondary schools because of lack of seats but for 40 per cent drop-out rate In twenty years the LFG has created this impasse in education in spite of a huge budget The reasons are fabulous increase in the pay scales of school teachers, making education free up to Class XII, giving subsidy to a group which does not deserve it, and putting the *apparatchik* at every conceivable nook and corner in the education system As a result the LFG is unable to establish new schools which the normal increase in student population requires nor can it enhance the teaching facilities of the existing schools

The All Bengal Teachers' Association (whatever might be its present name), a front organisation of teachers of a Left party, totally controls the school education system and as a trade union wedded to the base principles of economism is busy garnering benefits for its members ignoring the interests of students Teachers are busy doing private practice and running costly "coaching shops" where attendance is enforced by manipulating class examination results In a 1994 survey of NCAER the literacy rate has been found to be 58 5 per cent (age +7) But the class bias remains totally unaffected even after 20 years of LF rule The same survey shows that among the landless wage earners only 43 6 per cent of male and 27 5 per cent of female are literate as against 93 4 per cent of male and 84 3 per cent of female among the large farmer group The social dominance of large farmers remains assured through more than double the rate of literacy among them I would not burden this essay with more data

One would have thought "declassing" would be a common phenomenon particularly when there was a direct assault on "elitism" in centres of excellence in education But what one finds is a pathetic attempt at "enbourgeoisification" by the petite bourgeoisie elements of the Left parties Shorn of self-respect and self-esteem some of them are flattering and pandering the rich and the influentials in the society to climb a notch or two in the slippery social pole *The Statesman,* Calcutta reported a news item on July 20, 1997 with a caption "Dalmiya compared to Tagore, Netaji" The disgusting story is about one Dalmiya He is a real estate agent and a contractor in Calcutta There is nothing wrong about it Article 19(g) of our Constitution guarantees rights of all citizens "to practice any profession or to carry on any occupation, trade or business" He is also an *apparatchik* of the cricket establishment of India He, by his electoral skill, got himself elected as the President of the International Cricket Control Board So far so good and good luck to him But he is no cricketer He is no Jam Saheb or a Merchant or a Mankad or a Hazare or a Gavaskar of cricket in India At the felicitation function at the Eden Gardens on July 19, 1997 a Minister of the LFG said

> Just as Rabindranath Tagore is the pride of the country in the field of literature, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose in social and political spheres, Jagadish Chandra Bose and C V Raman in science, and Satyajit Ray in art and culture, Jag Mohan Dalmiya is the pride of all Indians in the world of cricket

There was a brother Minister of his present in the function who concurred with this statement! Does it require any comment?

So what is the bottom line? No, it is certainly not wholly black No, it is not entirely red either In a fair measure of red there is quite some measure of black and grey Then there are some irrelevant and indeterminate colours making it look more like *café au lait* ■

NOTE

1 Quotations of John Harris, Neil Webster and Kristen Westergaard were taken from G K Leiten's *Development, Devolution and Democracy,* 1996 The book contains an exhaustive bibliography of current literature on the LFG in West Bengal

COMMUNICATION

NGO Bank and Reserve Bank

Apropos of my article on NGOs in India in *Mainstream* (June 28, 1997) I had raised a question about granting an NGO in Karnataka permission to set up a bank I thought an organisation like an NGO is unsuitable to run a bank My criticism of the Reserve Bank's action in permitting an NGO to run a bank has been subsequently vindicated by the decision of the Reserve Bank itself asking the NGO in Karnataka headed by Vijay Mahajan not to proceed with setting up the bank

Earlier the Reserve Bank had similarly to withdraw permission granted to non-banking companies—CRB Capital Markets Ltd , and Cox and Kings Now also in addition to the NGO two other non-banking companies—Alpic Finance Ltd and Karnataka-based ICDS Ltd —have been barred from proceeding further in the matter of setting up a bank Why? "The central bank's department of supervision (DOS) is investigating into the financial details of the promoters," reports Santosh Menon of *The Economic Times,* Mumbai (see the report "3 local bank promoters told to put plans on hold"—*The Economic Times,* Mumbai, August 18, 1997)

It is intriguing to know that the Reserve Bank of India, the agency to safeguard the integrity of the banking system, grants permission to any one desirous of setting up a bank without any check on the credentials or financial standing of the person setting up a bank Obviously the working of the Reserve Bank of India calls for a thorough probe by an independent agency

August 12, 1997
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Mumbai 400051

Subhash Chandra Sarker

NINAN KOSHY Autonomous Finance Ministry

(Continued from page 8)

decision had already been made, communicated to them, and a firm date had been set

The Additional Secretary (Finance) in charge of Insurance, comforted the conference "It is only a temporary setback " He meant that "of course there is something called Parliament, but we can manage and we can set a new firm date"

The prevailing non-democratic style of economic policy-making by a Finance Ministry which assumes autonomy and covers many pertinent issues under technical sophistication should be changed and reforms brought back to the domain of substantive critical political debate underlining their social costs ■

LETTER FROM CALCUTTA

PL Accounts Scam

AMITAVA MUKHERJEE

Ashok Mitra, the erudite and yet abrasive CPM MP of the Rajya Sabha, is now trying to become diplomatic knowing fully well that diplomacy is an art which, if not properly handled, can lead to disaster This is precisely what happened in the Rajya Sabha recently when while replying to the charges of financial malpractices against the Jyoti Basu Government in regard to the Personal Ledger accounts Mitra admitted that the West Bengal Government had committed a mistake, that mistakes might be common with everybody, and friendly advice, not virulent criticism, was expected from members of other political parties

Clearly Mitra's speech was a departure from what other members of the CPI and the CPM had so far said on this point The CPM, its MPs, MLAs, Ministers and the rank and file, have been vehemently defending the Jyoti Basu Government The CPI does not seem to have any such compulsion Moreover, the party and its leaders in West Bengal are often insulted by the CPM Yet Gurudas Dasgupta, the CPI MP, had sprung to his feet to defend the West Bengal Government

Even after the latest High Court judgement on the matter there has not been any significant qualitative change in the controversy The Court has only struck down the earlier order to institute an independent inquiry through the CAG and submission of its report to the Court itself But the basic charge of financial malpractices has not been quashed There have been other developments as well Another suit has been filed in the Calcutta High Court alleging that the West Bengal Government has misused other Central Government grants like the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana

The most interesting fallout is that some allies of the CPM at the Central level are now demanding the resignation of Jyoti Basu Clearly the situation can turn out to be extremely sticky for the West Bengal Chief Minister in future And in many ways the controversy has a striking similarity with the beginnings of the fodder scam that unfolded in Bihar years back Now Laloo Prasad Yadav is trying to extract the maximum mileage from the PL accounts scam He will leave no stone unturned to besmirch Jyoti Basu's image But for the CPM the most embarrassing truth is that it has seriously compromised the party's ability to attack other political personalities on charges of corruption An example is Sharad Yadav After initial bombardments the CPM is now comparatively quiet The reason is not far to seek One of Sharad Yadav's lieutenants had hit back accusing Jyoti Basu of corruption and demanding his resignation

Although it is pointless to speculate on the future judgements of the judiciary yet the CPM has not been sitting quiet Citing the last judgement of the Calcutta High Court quashing an earlier order to institute independent inquiries by the CAG a campaign is now going on throughout the State that there is no merit in the allegation of financial malpractices against the Jyoti Basu Government, that the last High Court judgement has proved it sufficiently, and that further judgements will also go in favour of the State Government CPM loyalists and their agents in the media in Calcutta are deliberately trying to play down the point that the aforementioned High Court order has refrained from making any comment on the fundamental allegation of financial malpractices

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Responsible officials of the State Government inform that due to the inept handling of his department by the State Finance Minister, Asim Dasgupta, the affairs in his Ministry are in a mess They also aver that Dasgupta who has time and again displayed his petty-mindedness, has the habit of keeping files pending and that has in turn resulted in chaos in the Finance Ministry This spirit of worthlessness has now percolated to the bottom level in such a manner that the Accountant General's office was forced to write to the Finance Secretary in March this year in a stern manner Its letter read

> It has come to the notice of audit during the various local inspections of the drawing and disbursing officers that huge sums of money are being retained in the cash chests of these offices for usually long periods of time without any justification and in blatant violation of treasury and financial rules It has also been observed that in most cases the bill-wise and age-wise analyses of these balances have also not been done regularly Even though the matter is pointed out in almost each and every inspection report issued after local audit to the DDOs and the government the trend continues unabated Such practice is fraught with serious risks of misappropriation, defalcation and fraud of government money partially or completely, temporarily or permanently

Now pedagogues like Ashok Mitra might try to explain it away in terms of incompetence and worthlessness which have certainly become the hallmark of Left Front rule in West Bengal But chaos is the breeding ground of corruption and there are instances where the Jyoti Basu Government has deliberately encouraged illegal acts The reason for and intention behind the acts are for the court to decide But CPM circles are harping on a hypothesis that for opening up and maintaining Personal Ledger accounts permission of the Accountant General is not mandatory However, clause 410(B) of subsidiary treasury rules clearly points out

> Such permission (in regard to opening of PL accounts) may not be granted except after consultation with the Accountant General and unless the government be satisfied that the initial accounts of money to be held in such personal deposit accounts are properly maintained and are subject to audit

There can be no doubt that the word consultation here means, concurrence only Then why has the Jyoti Basu Government been carrying on with such illegal acts year after year as the Accountant General's office has already traced a huge number of illegal personal accounts? Moreover, the AG office had repeatedly cautioned the State Government not to fall back upon the practice of opening a PL account first and then seeking the AG's permission for legalising the same, a subterfuge the Jyoti Basu Government has resorted to the hilt In a letter to the State Government the AG office clearly stated

> Future opening of PL accounts should be more purposive, need oriented and content/scheme specific and with "prior consultation" of AG and not "in anticipation" of his approval

Indictments from the AG office are plenty While the CPM is busy claiming that there is no compulsion to close down the PL accounts at the end of the financial year treasury rules aver

> Personal deposit accounts created by debit to the consolidated fund of the State other than those created under any law or rule having the force of the law by transferring funds from the consolidated funds of the State for discharging liabilities of the government arising out of special enactments, however, shall be closed at the end of the financial years by minus debit of the balance to the relevant service heads in the consolidated fund of the State similar personal deposit accounts being opened in the following year again if necessary in the usual manner

In addition a letter from the AG office has clearly stated "All the PL accounts more than one year old must be immediately closed"

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WHATEVER may be the outcome of the case, there are sufficient reasons for the raising of eyebrows over the West Bengal Government's attitude in regard to PL accounts One after another excuse has been profferred by CPM circles, politicians as well as the hordes of client intellectuals that the twenty years of Left Front rule in the State has nurtured There is a clear guideline from the AG office that if financial grants from the Centre comes late and cannot be utilised within the financial year then the left over money is kept with the Reserve Bank and does not go back the Central Government It can easily be used in next year's budget thereby resulting in an increase in the budgetary estimate According to the AG, this is constitutional and correct On the other hand, if this procedure is not followed then it is tantamount to cheating the Constitution and the Legislature Then why have the CPI and CPM MPs been shouting in Parliament? Whom do they try to defend?

The ball is now in the court of the judiciary However, an idea has already gained ground among the common people that there is a big scandal behind the PL accounts controversy In the meantime the Central Rural Development Minister has admitted that in only eight districts alone the Jyoti Basu Government's policy of diversion of money from savings account to Personal Ledger accounts has resulted in a loss of more than five crores of rupees of revenue He also informed the Rajya Sabha that the West Bengal Government has, on its own, diverted money from various Central Government sponsored schemes Why is the Marxist Government in West Bengal so interested in losing bank interests? Why are Left Front MPs like Biplab Dasgupta, Nilotpal Basu and Gurudas Dasgupta trying to push the erroneous point that financial grants arriving late need to be diverted as otherwise the money would have to be returned when the truth is just the opposite?

The Marxists are touchy about audit and accounts No one knows this better than what Morarji Desai had realised when as the head of the Janata Party Government he had demanded accounts of expenditures incurred by the Jyoti Basu Government out of Central grants advanced as flood relief Then it was this same Ashok Mitra, who as the then Finance Minister of the State, shouted at the top of his voice against such 'audacity' of the Prime Minister But this time the fast changing political alignments have landed the CPM in a tight corner I K Gujral is dreaming of completing his five-year term as the Prime Minister with Congress support He is now even prepared to dispense with the Left The Union Rural Development Minister's admission in the Rajya Sabha is its outcome Sitaram Kesri is gunning for the Marxists as the latter are standing in the way of his political calculations The Janata Dal is also alienated after the CPM's demand for Sharad Yadav's resignation on *hawala* charges Is it for these reasons that Ashok Mitra has been in search of friendly advice in Delhi? ■

BOOK REVIEW

Erosion of Constitutional Propriety and Democratic Process

SUBHASH CHANDRA SARKER

This review by the veteran journalist and writer was written before the Janata Dal's latest split

My Presidential Years by R Venkataraman, Harper Collins Publishers India Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 1994, pp xii, 671 plus photographs

President Venkataraman's Presidency covered the era of transition from one-party rule to coalition government at the Centre The period of his five years of Presidency (1987-92) saw the quick succession of Prime Ministers with Rajiv Gandhi, VP Singh, Chandra Shekhar and PV, Narasimha Rao Following them there have been three more Prime Ministers—Atal Behari Vajpayee, H D Deve Gowda and Inder Kumar Gujral The coalitions are yet to find stability and the interrgnum of Congress rule—during 1991-96—shows this instability No doubt the Congress party, to which Venkataraman belonged during his active political life, still remains very powerful but despite its numerical strength it is unable to assume power notwithstanding its great eagerness to do so Other political parties, particularly the CPI-M, cut no less a sorry figure having been caught in the dilemma of supporting a government whose major policy thrusts go diametrically opposite to what the party stands for But others are able to jockey to be at the government The Janata Dal, deeply afflicted by corruption charges involving both its President, Laloo Prasad Yadav, and the Working President, Sharad Yadav, who had earlier to quit his party post, being involved in the Jain *hawala* case, still manages to provide a Prime Minister (I K Gujral)

Political instability in turn gives rise to manipulative politics into which the Constitution, the President and the Supreme Court are willy nilly dragged There is inevitable erosion of constitutional proprieties and the rise of extra-constitutional practices President Venkataraman's reference to the growth in the number of writ petitions to bypass the established hierarchy for redress of grievance and his criticism of what he has termed the "temptation to clutch at jurisdiction and expand the scope of judicial review" (p 593), may be well meaning especially as it also gets indirect support from the similar sentiment expressed by A M Ahmadi, immediately on his retirement from the position of the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, who also bemoaned the plethora of Public Interest Litigation clogging the superior Courts But objectively speaking can it be said that the "established hierarchy for redress of grievances" (p 593) works at all? Corruption has not been contined to accepting bribes but has also spread to the sphere of the mind so that any decision hurting powerful persons is stalled on one ground or the other

The most serious allegations of bribery of the Bofors gun purchases was repeatedly side-tracked by persons in power, with backing from powerful persons outside and the "established hierarchy" was not able to do anything Indeed it itself got infected by the disease Similarly, the St Kitts forgery case has been hanging for almost a decade Some persons have since been acquitted now that the case has come to the trial stage That became possible only through a PIL Similarly, the Jain *hawala* case has come up for trial through a PIL as have the question of improper allotments of residential accommodation and petrol pumps to some persons However, the Court's intervention into this matter is not liked by the politicians as it threatens their endeavour to feather their own nest It is disappointing to find President Venkataraman also echoing this view as he writes that

> I cautioned against liberal exercise of Writ jurisdiction when alternative remedies were available so that the highest courts may not be choked with work (p 301)

But the cases which have come up before the Courts are exercising the public mind greatly, and in some cases decisions given by the Courts have tremendously helped the preservation of the efficacy of the government (such as the quashing the irregular allotment of government quarters, illegal occupation of government bungalows and the irregular allotment of petrol pump and LPG connections) and create an atmosphere of transparency and honesty in administration But for the Courts taking up these matters through writ petitions these irregularities would have continued for ever

Continued Erosion of Constitution

THERE has been an unseen, but nonetheless effective, erosion of the sanctity of constitutional provision in the country through bureaucratic, political and legal collusion which shows all concerned in a very poor light and which lies at the root of much of the present-day troubles in the country This was illustrated over the matter of the abolition of the two posts of Election Commissioners in December 1989 In government no posts are abolished if there is already an incumbent Two Election Commissioners were assisting the Chief Election Commissioners when the suggestion for the abolition of the posts of Election Commissioners was made That meant that the two persons already working in that capacity would lose their position There was no charge against any of the Election Commissioners The abolition of the posts was highly irregular and would involve loss of public esteem by the Election Commissioners The Attorney-General, who is expected to give correct legal advice to the government, also supported the move—even though the two incumbents would lose their job President Venkataraman, to whom the proposal came with the advice to agree to it, however, pointed to the inadequacy of the proposal in the absence of any recommendation of the Chief Election Commissioner, although such recommendation was mandatory under Article 324 of the Constitution

Now the game started President Venkatraman writes

> On January 1, 1990, Law Minister Dinesh Goswami and Attorney-General Soli Sorabjee called on me and offered explanations They argued that the Constitution dealt with the removal of other Election Commissioners and that the abolition of posts did not constitute 'removal' and cited case law in support (p 234)

President Venkataraman was not convinced by such an argument He told them that the Constitution envisaged

> a degree of independence to authorities like judges, the Comptroller and Auditor-General and Election Commission and that was why special provisions had been made in the Constitution against arbitrary termination of these offices

He further suggested that if the

> executive thought that there was not enough work for three Election Commissioners there should be a recommendation to that effect from the Chief Election Commissioner as contemplated in the Constitution The same day the Government sent a revised opinion from the Attorney-General containing a letter from the Chief Election Commissioner stating that he agreed with the opinion expressed by the reputed authors of the book on parliamentary practice in India (Kaul and Shakder), that there was not enough work for three Election Commissioners (p 334)

Please be it noted that the Chief Election Commissioner yet did not express his considered opinion about the work of the other two Election Commissioners but surprisingly enough he merely quoted the opinion expressed in a book on parliamentary practices However valuable the opinion expressed in a book was at the time it was written, it was no substitute for the opinion of the man on the spot in a different point of time and it was the incumbent duty for him to give his considered opinion which was not given in this case At least that is what is suggested by this account provided by President Venkataraman Nevertheless, on this fig leaf of adherence to the constitutional propriety President Venkataraman ultimately gave his consent to the proposal for the abolition of the posts of two Election Commissioners rendering the two persons jobless That was in 1990 Within a few years, under President Venkataraman's successor, the government headed by PV Narasimha Rao created two posts of Election Commissioners against stiff opposition from the then Chief Election Commissioner, TN Seshan, and the Supreme Court found that the appointment was valid and the Election Commissioners could not be ignored by the Chief Election Commissioner! What an irony!

The undermining of the Constitution was done by everybody because Mrs Indira Gandhi as the Prime Minister opened the floodgates of unprincipled action by flouting the Allahabad High Court judgement against her by riding roughshod over the sanctity of the Constitution through the declaration of "Internal Emergency" for which there was no provision in the Constitution of India and clamping censorship over all media and even on the publication of the proceedings in Parliament and verdicts of High Courts and the Supreme Court and by putting all political leaders and many others not to her liking behind the bars, even not permitting the near and dear ones to know where they were being detained and how they were This was comparable with the worst days of the British rule

Jamnadas Dwarkadas has written in his memoirs that he was released off the record by his British jailor to see an ailing friend on his mere verbal undertaking to come back to the Poona jail and that he was taken to Poona railway station by the Police

Commissioner himself to board the train for Bombay But in independent India during the Emergency even the rights granted to the people by the Constitution could not be availed of and the Supreme Court could do nothing about that The law came to be interpreted in a manner as, to deny that right to citizens

Once the moral restraint was destroyed there was no stemming of the floodgate of moral degeneration, degradation and corruption Indeed in the absence of any standard it became impossible to distinguish between what was correct and what was wrong People involved with the machinery of the state thought no misuse to be wrong or unjustified Even persons achieving distinction in other fields behaved in a bizarre way very much like animals torn from their natural habitat going berserk as described by Robert Ardrey in his book *Territorial Imperative* In this misbehaviour the non-Congressmen in power were no different than Congressmen in power The chapter 'Cabinet Crisis' details the shameful shenanigans of the top political leaders occupying high constitutional office (pp 390-397) Even the sanctity of confidentiality of the communication of the Prime Minister (VP Singh) to the President (about the dismissal of the then Deputy Prime Minister, Devi Lal) was breached President Venkataraman has raised the point how the corres-pondence between the Prime Minister to his Cabinet colleagues becomes "public property" (p 397) It was clear that the Indian state had lost its bearing altogether as subsequent developments were to highlight

Gossip and New Delhi Politics

It seems that New Delhi's politics was governed as much by gossip as by anything else Some Congress Members of Parliament carried the gossip to Venkataraman, while he was the Vice-President of India, that the then President Zail Singh had decided to dismiss the then Prime Minister (Rajiv Gandhi)—no matter if the Constitution of India offered no scope for the President, who is bound to act on the advice of the Prime Minister except at the time of appointing the Prime Minister, to dismiss the incumbent Prime Minister (pp 5-6) Vice-President Venkataraman was even approached to become the Prime Minister in place of Rajiv Gandhi Venkataraman did not fall into the trap and thus became the President of India Even senior Cabinet Ministers could not ignore the rumours as one Cabinet Minister asked President Venkataraman himself if he had called for Rajiv Gandhi's resignation Of course there was no basis President Venkataraman recounts these rumours

> I told PV (Narasimha Rao, who was then Minister of Human Resources Development in Rajiv Gandhi's Cabinet) that Delhi was the greatest gossip mill (p 69)

In a subsequent occasion he had to issue an official denial that Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar had suggested the introduction of "internal Emergency" (p 543)

Security

THE bureaucracy has a great fancy for causing great public inconvenience in the name of security, even when there is no need for making any fuss I was in New Delhi in 1959-60 and was making purchases from the Khadi Gramodyog Bhavan at Regal Cinema Building in Connaught Circus, when Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru entered the Khadi Bhavan I was intent on making my own purchases There was a mild stir in the shop but nothing in particular I even did not look up to the gentleman who had come to my side Before I could do that I felt somebody mildly nudging me from the other side and looked up and saw a person signalling me to move a little apart so that the purchaser next to me could complete the purchase In annoyance I looked and saw Nehru, the Prime Minister, by my side I moved aside and he made his purchases So slight was the security in those days Yet before coming to New Delhi, I had a bitter, and worse, experience in Calcutta, where roads used to be declared out of bounds in the fifties for the convenience of the Prime Minister and President visiting the city

In the late fifties, I could meet anybody in the South Block in Delhi just by obtaining a visitor's pass at the gate for which simply I had to write my name and address Put the name of the gentleman I wanted to meet and sign the form Even in the late sixties airports in India were virtually open, when in Europe already checks were introduced in airports In India things have been much worse, partly as a result of the extraordinary proliferation of security agencies—both official and non-official In effect a security industry has grown up, providing large scope for corruption and manipulation of civic life Lots of imports are made in the name of security Even criminals are being given security cover at public cost—unheard of anywhere else in the world Corrupt politicians facing trial in courts also enjoy security at government cost—making a mockery of the whole system in this country Indeed security has been made a status symbol, the greater the cost of security one receives at the expense of the public exchequer, the higher is his status!

Only there is no security for the common citizen who bears all the expenditure of maintaining the huge police and security forces The innocent citizens can get killed while travelling, observing cultural functions or even staying at home! The Greek philosopher, Plato, observed that in a state there are citizens who enjoy all the rights and fruits of labour of others, and the slaves who form the majority Nowhere is the truth of Plato's observation better seen than in India, where the difference between the privileged few and the vast majority of the people is pronounced and growing daily

Security as observed by the government often tends to become a hurdle for the VVIPs causing them annoyance and inconvenience Venkataraman, the President of India, was once or twice himself the victim of this obsession with security He was once invited by the Old Boys Association of the Aligarh Muslim University to deliver the annual lecture The organisers were called upon by the security officers to change the venue of the meeting two days before the meeting (p 93) which caused a lot of difficulties and additional expenditure for the organisers and also the public because the route travelled by the President was blocked by security "I felt annoyed but helpless," President Venkataraman writes (p 94) His efforts to get things changed "was always confronted with the Blue Book Regulations" President Venkataraman had to curtail his movement in Delhi producing a result just opposite to the greater freedom of a person elected President of the country The security arrangements in Rashtrapati Bhavan was not under the President or his Military Secretary but under the Home Ministry

Even the judges of the Supreme Court are not spared from harassment on grounds of security, as President Venkataraman himself records

> The resentment came to a head when the security people did not spare even the judges invited to dinner during the annual judges conference convened by the Chief Justice of India (p 327)

A situation where the Supreme Court judges could not attend their own conference without being trammelled by the bureaucracy parading as "security" shows the extent of regimentation of society that has already overtaken this country under "democracy"

It is not surprising, but no less deplorable for that fact, that in May 1997 an ordinary citizen is beaten up on the streets of New Delhi so severely as to need hospitalisation for the sole "crime" of going by the road through which the Prime Minister (I K Gujral) had earlier passed!

The surprising thing is that this monstrous system of security is not being changed, although from the President, the Prime Minister to ordinary citizens everybody sees the need for changing it Venkataraman's observation is already referred to H D Deve Gowda, when he was the Prime Minister, lamented the excess perpetrated under the pretext of Prime Minister's security President Venkataraman writes

> At Rashtrapati Bhavan I constantly came across the established view of the staff of how a President should function Whenever I made an implicit or explicit claim to be myself and not only the President, there were often objections from the staff In most cases I had to give in for it is not easy to waive security procedures or other matters of Presidential protocol (p 51)

The more surprising fact is that when two former Prime Ministers—VP Singh and H D Deve Gowda—convey that as former Prime Ministers they do not require security for themselves and members of their families, such requests are ignored VP Singh pursued the matter upto the Supreme Court but his request is yet to be met Thus security in this country has assumed a logic of its own independent of the lives that it is supposed to protect and has nullified the constitutional rights granted under the Fundamental Rights of the Constitution of India

Then there are people including convicted criminals enjoying the protection of security at government cost Security as defined by the Government of India thus confers an undeserving power and status rather than meeting the genuine needs of security so that even when the government itself sees no need to provide security that decision has had to be reversed in some cases—the most notable case being that of one former Chief Minister of a southern State

How the money of the harassed citizens is spent on infructuous expenditure in the name of security is given by the rough estimate of money spent every year for security to former Prime Ministers and their families Security for Mrs Sonia Gandhi, widow of Rajiv Gandhi, and her children costs the public exchequer Rs 5 50 crores every year The highest expenditure is on PV Narasimha Rao and his three sons and five daughters (Rs 18 crores a year) The lowest expenditure is on Atal Behari Vajpayee (Rs 2 crores—because being unmarried he has no children) Deve Gowda with his two sons and four daughters (Rs 14 50 crores), VP Singh and Chandra Shekhar with two sons each (Rs 7 crores each) Security for the incumbent Prime Minister, I K

Gujral, with two sons will cost Rs 9 crores. If the amount of about Rs 50 crores thus spent were spent on setting up primary schools nearly five lakh schools could be opened. [See Sankar Ghose "*Nirapattar Namey Bajey Kharach* (Unnecessary Expenditure in the Name of Security)" in the Bengali *Weekly Bartaman*, Calcutta, May 31, 1997, (pp. 42-43]

From the account of President Venkataraman we know that even a reduced security for an ex-Premier used to cost Rs 75 lakhs annually in 1990. Over 125 security personnel were deployed and four bullet proof cars and five escort vehicles were provided at that time (p. 346). Yet the cry was raised that enough of security was not provided. If despite the deployment of such a huge staff it was not possible to save lives it underlined that the problem of security had to be tackled on a different plane altogether. After all there should be limit to the attention to, and expenditure on, the security provided by the state to an individual. A look at the list of persons enjoying security at the cost of the public exchequer would be highly instructive. As a matter of fact the governments at the Centre and in States should publish a list of persons provided security at government cost and the amount spent for each of them as well as the purpose of providing security to such persons.

"The Patna High Court has asked the State Government to furnish a list of people who have been provided security at public cost. The Court expressed concern over the fact that even those with criminal records have been provided with security, guards and this gives alarming signals to the law-abiding citizens." (*The Times of India*, Mumbai, June 8, 1997 report of Sanjay K. Jha "Court orders Bihar to furnish list of people given security") In Maharashtra the persons enjoying the luxury of having security guards from the government include Harshad Mehta, the brain behind the securities scam in which thousands of crores of rupees were involved, Murli Deora, Mukesh Patel and Praful Patel—all businessmen (Sucheta Dalal and Somasekhar Sundaresan, "Different Strokes" in *Sunday Times of India*, June 8, 1997). Even Arun Gawli, recently released from jail, has a police jeep to protect him. *(ibid)*

Governor

"IN course of time... the office of the Governor became a sinecure for unwanted or inconvenient politicians," he writes (p. 128). The practice of the Prime Minister consulting the President followed by the first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, came to be discontinued by the time Venkataraman became President (*ibid*). However, there is an apparent contradiction in what Venkataraman writes because immediately after writing these critical lines he writes:

> During my tenure, all Prime Ministers, Rajiv Gandhi, V.P. Singh, Chandra Shekhar and Narasimha Rao, informally consulted me on the appointment of Governors and I do not remember any occasion where I had taken any exception to the names proposed. (p. 128)

So where was the occasion for making this comment that "the practice of the Prime Minister consulting the President... fell into disuse"? (p. 128)

Bureaucrats as Governors

SOME of the Governors—particularly drawn from the ranks of the civil service—were bent upon creating difficulties in the way of smooth functioning of popular ministries in the States under their charge. President Venkataraman mentions the conduct of the Tamil Nadu Governor S.L. Khurana, who insisted on the newly elected leader of the government, on the death of M.G. Ramachandran, securing the absolute majority of the membership of the Assembly, in the face of the constitutional provision that a simple majority of the members present and voting is sufficient.

Even after this was pointed out to him,

> Khurana went elaborately into the question, consulting eminent lawyers and finally gave his decision which was that a simple majority of those present and voting was sufficient. (p. 135)

It was, of course, not stated who bore the burden of this unnecessary expenditure. Surely Khurana did not pay out of his personal funds. This is how public exchequer shows a deficit despite hefty annual tax increases.

President vis-a-vis Governor

THE popular assumption is that the President has supervisory powers over the Governor of a State. In practice, however, the President has no powers to issue directives or dismiss a Governor. So, when the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh (N.T. Rama Rao) complained to the President of India against the State Governor (Kumudben Joshi), Venkataraman merely forwarded the representation to the Home Ministry for "necessary action" (p. 242).

The President could not even accept the resignation offered by a Governor. When the Punjab Governor, General Malhotra, resigned, he passed the letter of resignation to the Home Ministry (p. 559).

But President Vankataraman apparently agreed that the President should have no independent role in the matter of the Governor as his reaction to the removal of the Governor of Nagaland, Dr H M Thomas, in April 1992 shows (p 616-17)

Mercy Petitions

SIMILARLY mercy petitions to the President are also decided by the Council of Ministers Venkataraman has raised the question

> First, should not the President have discretion to examine any extenuating circumstance and alter the death sentence without the advice of the Government? How else can prejudice or partisanship be prevented? Absence of such a power unnecessarily brings blame to the President (pp 248-49)

Moreover, there was also unusual delay in disposing of mercy petitions by the Ministry (pp 147-148) Venkataraman even wrote to the Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, giving vent to his exasperation over such delay, causing misunderstanding by the public of the President's office

Bureaucratic Pig-headedness

PRESIDENT Venkataraman was made to confront with a problem of protocol by the Indian officials while visiting the Soviet Union, when the President of the USSR Gromyko proposed to read a message from Gorbachev who had no official standing Although in the Soviet Union's constitutional set-up the General Secretary of the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union), the position held by Gorbachev, was much more important in all matters and the President had to defer to the General Secretary in all matters The situation then was not very different in India Though Venkataraman, the President, as a state functionary was superior to the Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, the latter (Gandhi) was much more important without whose agreement the President of India could not take a single constitutionally valid step In this respect the Soviet President, although clearly subordinate to the General Secretary at that time (the situation has undergone radical change after the break-up of the Soviet Union making the President all-powerful, while the situation in India remains unchanged), was arguably perhaps a little more powerful than the Indian President, constitutionally speaking Be that as it may, President Venkataraman personally "did not see anything wrong" in the suggestion for reading out the message sent by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi as a reciprocal gesture He was not allowed to do so, on grounds of protocol, by the Indian Foreign Secretary, K P S Menon, whose view was that the President being a superior constitutional functionary to the Prime Minister it would be highly improper for him to read out a message from the Prime Minister who ranked below the President

Venkataraman was clearly annoyed at the stand of the Foreign Secretary He writes

> I felt that it would look odd if the Soviet President read the message at the ceremony (marking the closing ceremony of the Festival of India in Moscow) and there was none from our side I also did not countenance the idea of the Minister of State reading the message either before my speech or after As a compromise I suggested that I would incorporate Rajiv Gandhi's message into my text so that it was not read out separately as a message and this was accordingly done (p 182)

How absurd the entire episode was! The President of India was reading out a message of the Prime Minister as part of his own speech!

Venkataraman's memoirs shows his profound understanding of the importance of 'intangible sentiments' in the relations between two countries This was revealed in his address to the civic reception accorded to him in Hanoi during his visit to Vietnam In the course of his speech he said that

> even before independence, two brave young men participating in a demonstration in Calcutta in support of the freedom struggle in Vietnam had died in police firing Later in the 1950s, resonance of the Bengali slogan "*Aamaar naam, Tomaar naam, Vietnam, Vietnam*" (meaning my name, as your name is the same, O! Vietnam—SCS) was heard throughout India the speech was received with standing ovation for several minutes (p 512)

Irrationality of Administrative Set-up

RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN observed a five-day week But the President was often called upon to do official work including swearing in of Ministers and receive foreign dignitaries on Saturdays and holidays but "there was no staff to meet the needs of the occasion as it was a weekly holiday"! (p 55) At his insistence a system of rotation was introduced to ensure the presence of staff on all days of the week

President's Assent to Bills of State Legislatures

IN the matter of giving assent to State laws the President is likewise powerless State Governments and Members of Parliament make representation against delay to the President who has no say either on the timing of action or on the substantial decision, on such matters President Venkataraman wrote to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi that this "has become an irritant in the Centre-State relations" (p 157)

Systematic Undercutting of the President

THE way the Union Government was dealing with the President would suggest a calculated move to deprive the President's office of all significance President Zail Singh had earlier been the target of personal malignment President Venkataraman suffered loss of credibility on account of the manner of functioning of the Home Ministry A parliamentary question elicited the reply that 63 bills referred by State Governments were awaiting the President's assent This failed to state that the bills had not been cleared by the Home Ministry Venkataraman's sense of outrage is characteristically expressed

> I have an old habit of clearing all files within 24 hours, but if a file is not submitted by the nodal ministry, the President is powerless (p 157)

In his letter to the Prime Minister he wrote that "it was necessary to evolve a system for clearance of the bills within four months of reference to the Centre" (p 157) What fate his suggestion met remains unstated

President as Mediator between Central Ministers

MEDIATION in intra-Cabinet disputes is certainly not among the constitutional functions of the President However, President Venkataraman has recounted how he had pacified the then Finance Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, who had submitted his resignation on some disputes to the Prime Minister, who had refused to accept the same, by counselling Prime Minister Narasimha Rao leading to an eventual compromise and withdrawal of Dr Singh's resignation (pp 571-72)

Role of President in a Hung Parliament

PRESIDENT VENKATARAMAN was faced with an unprecedented situation when no party emerged with a clear-cut majority to be able to form the government in 1989 when the ninth Parliament was elected He had to decide whom he should first call to form the Ministry He felt that if the Congress party headed by Rajiv Gandhi, which had been defeated in the elections having succeeded to get only 194 members returned, but which was the single largest party in the new Parliament, staked its claim then he was honour-bound to ask him to form the Ministry with the stipulation that he gets a vote of confidence from Parliament within a stipulated time But eventually Rajiv Gandhi was to forego the opportunity to form a Ministry—which was in line with the suggestion unofficially mooted by the President when they sought his opinion, and the President called the leader of the next largest party, VP Singh, who formed the Ministry (pp 313-26)—a course followed by President Venkataraman's successor, Dr Shankar Dayal Sharma, when he called on the leader of the largest party in the hung eleventh Lok Sabha, Atal Behari Vajpayee of the Bharatiya Janata Party, to form the Ministry which Vajpayee did but was unable to sustain, having failed to get a vote of confidence from Parliament

Rajiv Gandhi Foundation

IN the Budget for 1991-92 the Finance Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, proposed to give Rs 100 crores to the newly set-up Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, of which Mrs Sonia Gandhi was the chairperson for life and Rahul, Priyanka, the then Vice-President Shankar Dayal Sharma and a few others as trustees Despite great sympathy for Mrs Sonia Gandhi after Rajiv's assassination, there was tremendous opposition to misuse the tragedy as a convenient means of mulcting the national exchequer of this huge amount The Minister of State for Finance, Rameshwar Thakur, met the President to seek his "advice as a former Finance Minister on these matters" President Venkataraman was forthright in his reply

> As regards the grant to the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation I said, as Finance Minister, I would have provided a token grant of Rs 100 crore and financed worthwhile schemes of national importance of the Foundation on merit There was no need for the Foundation to get a government grant and it could easily manage with private philanthropy (p 571)

Mrs Sonia Gandhi sensed the national mood of resentment to such benevolence in the name of the slain Rajiv Gandhi and wrote to the government to decline the offer of Rs 100 crores Of course, the Foundation did not lack in receiving donations from other sources It is strange, to say the least, that a trust asking for public donations should have a life-chairperson and many of her closest relatives on the board of trustees

Birthday-bash Corruption

THE so-called "birthday celebration" shows the corrupting ways of New Delhi as perhaps few other things show The people who grew old without ever celebrating their own birthday or anybody else in his political party or family ever thinking of such celebration are induced, after a few years stay in New Delhi enjoying the comforts of office over a long period, gradually but irrevocably drawn to making a show of their birthday Eventually not only Venkataraman's birthday was celebrated his wife's birthday was also celebrated (p 591)

Venkataraman did not observe public celebration of an intensely personal affair as birth anniversary while he was a Minister in Tamil Nadu and even in New Delhi But a few years' stay in power mellowed him and when he became the Vice-President he began to celebrate his birthday publicly (p 111)

President's Foreign Visit

PRESIDENT VENKATARAMAN lists the persons accompanying the President on a normal tour of a foreign country The number a typical entourage consists of runs to about eighty This is apart from Members of Parliament and pressmen that the President might include to accompany him on his tour A visit by the Indian President cost the host country about Rs 10 crores at the beginning of the 1990s (pp 573-74)

Imperial Grandeur of Rashtrapati Bhavan

"FEW heads of state anywhere in the world live in such imposing splendour as the President of India does in Rashtrapati Bhavan," President Venkataraman writes after visiting a large number of heads of government in the other countries all over the world and living there during the period of visit (p 20) His own feelings in living inside Rashtrapati Bhavan he puts in the following words "I seemed to have shrunk in size, my comparatively diminutive form quite lost amidst such vastness " (p 20) His granddaughter humorously suggested that Venkataraman should resign from the post of President and move back to the Vice-President's house just to escape the honour of living in that building with "non-functional living apartments" (p 24)

Congress Leaders' Craving to be in Power

LONG years of remaining in power at the Centre and several States had led members of the Congress party to develop an unnatural craving to be in power, especially when a numerically inferior party remains in power with the support of the Congress Evidence of this craving is visible in 1996-97, particularly after assumption of the Congress leadership by Sitaram Kesri, whose close links with the late Rajiv Gandhi's family is well known This tendency was not Kesri's personal peculiarity as President Venkataraman's memoirs reveal In 1990-91 the Congress party under the leadership of Rajiv Gandhi was lending support to the Chandra Shekhar Ministry at the Centre, although Chandra Shekhar's party was numerically far insignificant Soon the Congress party was impatient being out of power, especially as a numerically inferior party was ruling with Congress support And Rajiv Gandhi had to give up that veneer of respecting the electorate's verdict against the Congress assuming power and sought an opportunity to be the Prime Minister again In early February 1991, Rajiv Gandhi approached President Venkataraman with a note of complaints against the Chandra Shekhar Ministry, although barely three months earlier on November 8, 1990 Rajiv Gandhi had told him "that his (Rajiv's) support to Chandra Shekhar was neither temporary nor conditional" (p 437) and it was to enable the country to tide over a national crisis (p 438) Summing up his own assessment of Rajiv Gandhi's attitude President Venkataraman writes

> I noticed a definite shift in Rajiv Gandhi's thinking He was not only prepared to head the Government *but was eager* to do so (pp 473—italics added)

President Venkataraman's memoirs thus deserves to be closely studied by all students of political science as it is found to work in India ■

RM PAL Universal Primary Education

(Continued from page 9)

middle class mindset is indeed a hard nut to crack

A well-known Professor of Economics, Amartya Sen, has analysed the reasons for the criminal neglect in the field of elementary education

> The traditionally elitist tendencies of the ruling cultural and religious traditions in India may have added to the political problem Both Hinduism and Islam have, in different ways, had considerable inclination towards religious elitism, with reliance respectively on Brahmin priests and on powerful Mullahs, and while there have been protest movements against each (the mediaeval poet Kabir fought against both simultaneously), the elitist hold is quite strong in both these religions This contrasts with the more egalitarian and populist tradition of, say, Buddhism Buddhist countries have had much higher levels of basic literacy than societies dominated by Hinduism or Islam In India both *ancient* and *modern* biases shape our policies reflecting prejudices of class divisions as well as of traditional cultures The difficulty in getting even Left-wing parties interested in combating inequalities in education relates to the general social atmosphere in India, including the nature of the leadership of the different parties which takes some major disparities as simply 'given' and, not particulary worth battling against in view of other—perceived to be more 'pressing'—challenges (*India Economic Development and Social Opportunities*, OUP, 1995) ■

Blistering Report of the Somalia Commission

K F RUSTAMJI

Four years ago Canada was shaken by reports from Somalia that its peace-keeping unit, Canadian Airborne Regiment, which had a proud record, had committed atrocities, shot two Somali youths who had entered the army compound for stealing, one of whom died, and tortured and killed another One soldier was convicted of manslaughter, another tried to commit suicide and could not be tried owing to brain damage The Opposition in parliament insisted on a full judicial enquiry, so Justice Giles Letourneau, with another judge and a reputed journalist were appointed to carry it out That was the time the Defence Minister was standing for leadership of her party as the Defence Department was asked to go a bit easy about the incident That gave rise to stories of cover-up which incensed the Commission, although it was only traditional resistance to inquisitiveness, combined with some small deceptions The Liberal Party that had demanded a full judicial enquiry was voted to power and promptly repudiated the report they had insisted on, believing that if you have to live with the military you cannot go to war with it

A small army mistake had got mixed up with politics and judicial activism and the result was a blistering report, blunt and unequivocal, so intemperately worded that all the sense it makes out is lost in angry exchanges I suppose that is the only language that gets attention these days We should expect that many more reports will follow this precedent It emphasises one fact that is present all over the world, that politicians are at a discount and the judiciary is trying to correct leadership

The Commission concluded that without massive changes in the military, including a purge of the top brass, a repeat of the Agrican debacle is almost certain

> The sorry sequence of events in Somalia was not the work of a few bad apples but the inevitable result of systematic organisation and leadership failures, many occurring over long periods of time and ignored by our military leaders for just as long

The anonymous voice from the Ministry squealed

> We gave these guys $25 million and 27 months, and still it wasn't enough for them

In the background I could hear the music of *dost, dost na raha*

Preparation for the mission fell far short of what was required In an interview the Chairman said

> Soldiers were deployed with equipment more suited for the Arctic than the African desert—heavy leather boots, thick sweaters and steel helmets
>
> Systems broke down and organisational discipline crumbled Such faults cannot be divorced from leadership responsibility, and the leadership errors in the Somalia mission were fundamental, the systems in place were inadequate, practices that placed individual ambition ahead of the needs of the mission had become entrenched, even when disturbing accounts of indiscipline and thuggery were known, there was disturbing inaction, subordinates were held to standards of responsibility by which many of those above were not prepared to abide Our soldiers searched, often in vain for leadership and inspiration

In India we would consider it impertinent to question the Army about such failures In the para-military they are so common that they have come to be accepted as the normal method of functioning

Letourneau said in an interview

> The question was not who tortured Arone, but how could this thing happen with officers standing 80 feet away The report named 11 officers for failing in the performance of their duty, which included the Chief of Defence Staff

The Commission said

> Once again history repeats itself, in that only the lower ranks have been made to account for the marked failures of their leaders Sweeping change is the only way to recapture lost faith in the Canadian Force and to restore faith in our traditional role as international peacekeepers

A total of 157 recommendations were made, most of which appear to have been accepted Among the most sweeping is a complete overhaul of the military justice system

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In all the defence departments of the world, in all editorial offices, perhaps even in the United Nations, the Somalia report will be disregarded, or viewed with hostility, because it has spoken against the time-honoured ethos of the military The main point that the report makes in a vague sort of way is that peace-keeping is a police job, akin in all respects to helping the police in one's own country, called in British parlance *Aid to Civil Power* It has no military

The author is a distinguished police officer (now retired) A former Special Secretary (Home), he was a member of the National Police Commission set up during the tenure of the Janata Government at the Centre (1977-79) overtones, even if there are armed gangs roaming all over the place In fact heavily armed forces are a constant anxiety to the commander, and a serious irritant to the people they are supposed to protect The very qualities that make a unit good for war, may make it unsuitable for peace-keeping, especially if the men do not know the local language Peace-keeping requires a standard of individual soldier who is well above the ordinary He must be well informed, well briefed, able to read a newspaper, legally correct, trained to use minimum force, even to be compassionate and considerate, qualities which are not required in the ranks of an Army, but are essential for peace-keeping

The report says

> Although his failures of leadership would be grievous enough in any senior commander, they acquire uniquely troubling dimensions when they appear in a Chief of Defence Staff who must lead and inspire the entire Canadian Force

The report has stepped on too many military corns It has dared to suggest transparency in a subject that has always needed it, and never got it

It has questioned the infallibility of senior officers who have been respected like religious prophets of their community

It has inscribed with scorn all the loops of military responsibility, authority and leadership They need to be reviewed at a time when men in the ranks have started coming from the same social class, often with the same education and officers do not have the born superiority of the feudal barons or the king's royal and loyal henchmen

And the cardinal sin it has suggested a review of military judicial systems to bring it in line with civil procedures, which are also antiquated

The old-time officer will say "The report is plain rubbish" To the men who want armies suitable for our times, and for the situations they will face, the report will come like a dose of bitter medicine, useful but distasteful

The important point that the report makes is that with modern communications the officers must keep in close touch with their men and be able to correct mistakes in the instant, and not say that these are the mistakes of the lower rank "rogue" soldiers and their junior officers It implies that officer responsibility assumes a new shape not only in preparing a unit for a special assignment, and in training it, but in knowing what is happening minute by minute, and taking quick action to check any wayward tendencies, particularly when men are in a trying climate, are given the wrong clothing and equipment for it and have to face hostility which they had never expected

"What about image?"—the old-time officer will ask Should I allow the place in my charge to go to rack and ruin and tell the ranks that they are not soldiers but some low-down civilian police? That is exactly the point that the Somalia report brings out When you take on peace-time duties in another land (or even in your own in a place like Kashmir), your standards must be those of a well-trained and well-led police unit, that considers all the people in its charge as citizens of its own country Colour conscious soldiers have obviously no place in a unit keeping peace in Somalia (communal types are clearly unsuitable for Kashmir) Even in the higher ranks there are many officers that are so obsessed by ideas of military superiority that they tend to see all civilian laws as weak and ineffective, and all civilians attached to them as unreliable (in Kashmir they shot dead two guides on rumours that they were spies) Such officers would prefer a make-shift effort in which the commander with unchecked violence and his sense of right and wrong settles everything firmly and prepares to go home

If we go to the ranks and assess them we are appalled at their ideas about the people they have been deputed to protect or police, a word they dislike There may be some who despise the people, want to hit them hard at every turn to bring them to their senses Most of them are incensed at the casualties they have suffered and want to take revenge on any one of the opposite side who appears insolent If one of these men in the ranks is able to talk to you openly, you will be surprised to find suppressed rage which makes the unit unsuitable for duties The safest course would be to move out such units and replace them with freshly trained and briefed units We made the mistake of not moving out suspect units and officers who do not believe in impartial administration And what a price we have had to pay in Jammu and Kashmir!

The Canadians have a good record in peace-keeping The United Nations should congratulate the Canadian people and parliament that a small incident, which most countries would have ignored, was taken up in parliament for a detailed debate That the death of two Somali youngsters could rouse the people of a distant country so much is a measure of their humanitarian concern The Somalia Commission report may have some defects, but it will serve as a landmark judgement, a beacon light to future peace-time operations, that any unit working on behalf of the world must observe the highest standards of justice and responsibility ■

BLUE PENCIL

Behind Farooq Abdullah's Outburst

G S BHARGAVA

According to a senior journalist friend who was present at the recent conference of Chief Whips in Srinagar, the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah, 'blasted' the press, charging it with 'irresponsibility' in his speech at the meeting His complaint was as much against the local print medium as against metropolitan newspapers As mentioned by the friend, his 'diatribe' has gone virtually unreported except for a skimpy account in the PTI version *The Hindustan Times* has reported it in some detail because its story on the Chief Minister's advocacy of 'a strong mechanism' to investigate complaints of excesses by the security forces, including the Army, provoked Dr Abdullah's ire

Dr Abdullah, unfortunately, has a record of intolerance of critical newspapers During his earlier stint as the Chief Minister in 1989, he had gone to the extent of enacting a law to curb freedom of the press The Kashmir Special Powers (Press) Bill 1989 was so draconian that it provided for pre-censorship and naturally raised a storm of protest, in the State as well as in other parts of the country The Press Council of India also shared the concern and ultimately prevailed upon the State Government to withdraw the measure and establish a Press Advisory Council with representative journalists also as members as 'a useful forum for constructive dialogue'

The Press Council with Justice Sarkaria as the Chairman intervened when the State Government sought its opinion on the law and tried to justify it on the basis of writings in the local newspapers It was then pointed out that the government which felt so aggrieved as to enact the 'superfluous' Bill had not cared to approach the Council earlier on any of the 'offensive' writings in the newspapers It had straightaway decided to wield the big stick

Notwithstanding the judicial language used by the Council, it was a slap in the face of the government More unfortunately, it had an offshoot in the shape of upsurge of militancy in the State, with terrorists targeting journalists and newspapers also Outstation correspondents had to leave Srinagar almost *en masse*, causing a vacuum to be filled by propagandists of the terrorists

Coming to the present *cause célèbre*, the Chief Minister's first reaction was to deny flatly *The Hindustan Times* report, calling it 'a figment of the journalist's (Jay Raina's) imagination' Dr Abdullah also tried to rub it in, adding that

> if the correspondent has sources in the Union Home Ministry, for God's sake let us know who they are Why create divisions by spreading falsehood?

It appears that the State Government thought it was a 'plant' by unfriendly officials in the Union Home Ministry Its other complaint—that references to alleged human rights violations by the security forces are grist to the Pakistani propaganda mills—is well taken but that does not condone the way the State Government reacted to the report

The PTI report on the incident, for instance, said

> The Chief Minister lashed out at journalists for playing up armed militancy Irked at the report appearing in a national daily from New Delhi, Dr Abdullah accused journalists of raking up human rights issues and ignoring other important issues

Whether 'raking up human rights issues' objectively facilitates the Pakistani game-plan in Jammu and Kashmir is a different matter which cannot be pursued here Suffice it to say that narrow patriotism should not come in the way of a journalist doing his professional duty of exposing violation of human rights, if it takes place It also helps in the long run in defeating the objective of the secessionists, by the way

In the present instance, *The Hindustan Times* report did not 'rake up the human rights issue' It disclosed the contents of a demi-official letter of Dr Abdullah to the Union Home Minister suggesting 'the constitution of a special group of officers (either serving or retired) from different Services, including the army and para-military forces, to go into the existing system of internal investigation' of alleged excesses by the security forces Dr Abdullah's letter was in response to a petition on the subject by a non-governmental organisation (NGO) forwarded to him by the Union Home Minister According to the letter, the prevalent 'internal procedures for investigating human rights violations by the forces' are lacking in credibility It also says that the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) or the State Commission to be set up lack the mandate to investigate charges against the Army and the para-military forces

The newspaper report actually joins issue with Dr Abdullah's perception, quoting Home Ministry sources, and cites instances, including the Bijbehara tragedy in November 1993, when the NHRC investigation had led to punishment of BSF officers and men and compensation to the victims of the BSF high-handedness

Leaving aside the question of 'raking up human rights issues', how did the Chief Minister, after having written the letter as recently as on July 27, totally deny the report and attribute motives to the correspondent? When the correspondent stood by his story and cited additional particulars, the State Government had to publish the entire correspondence on the subject with the Home Ministry and expose itself A less diligent correspondent than Raina would have let Dr Abdullah get away with his convenient memory

Meanwhile, equally surprisingly, the demand for Statehood for the Telengana area of Andhra Pradesh which seems to be gathering momentum, has been virtually ignored by most of the newspapers According to reports in the *Andhra Pradesh Times*, several leading Congressmen including a former Deputy Chief Minister, C Jagannath Rao, with his impeccable record for integrity in public life, are associated with the movement for a Telengana State on the lines of the proposed Uttarakhand The BJP is also said to favour the move, so do the Naxalite groups and the Majlis Bachao Tehreek, the breakaway faction of Owasi's Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (MIM) They held an all-party convention in Hyderabad recently to project the demand

More interestingly, the newspaper had a story that there was impersonation during the election of members of the Congress Working Committee at the Calcutta AICC session Naming names, the report said votes had been cast on the behalf of two delegates from Andhra Pradesh—both well-known figures—and condoned by V Hanumantha Rao, a former President of the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee, who 'certified the dupes' If both the votes had been cast for Vijayabhaskar Reddy his narrow win over Rajesh Pilot is manipulated

Finally, two juicy tidbits A report in the *Free Press Journal* of a hunger strike by a Magistrate, Rambhau Tidke, who was suspended two years ago for delivering wrong judgment His justification is that upper-caste Magistrates who delivered wrong judgments are not punished but he has been singled out because he is a lower-caste person Anna Hazare, the crusader against corruption in Maharashtra, has supported his new facet of judicial activism at the lower levels

The second, from *The Tribune*, is about a woman police officer of Panchkula in Haryana who 'intruded into Himachal territory and forcibly took away' a police officer who was in the lock-up at Barotiwala Police Station The report did not say why the police officer has been locked up by the authorities in the neighbouring State ■

USHA RAI

Sanjoy Ghose, ULFA and Media

(Continued from page 5)

for proof or forcing the Army and the police to find evidence

The plethora of contradictory statements and the absence of proof have left Ghose's family still nurturing hopes that he will return But each report of his death was like a nail being hammered through their hearts

While now the Assam Government is trying to say that he was killed within 48 hours of his abduction, the ULFA on July 22 night had released a statement to the media that he had drowned in a boat accident on July 8 Within 12 hours this press statement was contradicted by another statement that said he was alive and would be released

Dulal Barua, a respected but retired Janata Dal leader from Jorhat, was contacted by the ULFA boys on July 14 and assured that Ghose was alive and would be released to him by August 1 On July 28, Paresh Barua rings up Sanjoy's wife, Sumita, and in a 20-minute dialogue assures her that Ghose is alive and well "Can I have proof of this," she asks and is told that when Paresh says he is well and alive it is proof enough The terms set for the release of Ghose are faithfully followed by the AVARD-NE team The International Committee of the Red Cross is contacted by the ULFA and told that Sanjoy would be released to it

Then on August 4 night the Army intercepts two ULFA messages that Sanjoy had jumped off a cliff in Arunachal Pradesh and that the Army should be made the scapegoat for his death So without proof, the Army announces that Ghose is dead The following day, the ULFA dittos the Army statement and newspapers report it faithfully The Rajya Sabha condoles Sanjoy Ghose's death and efforts are on to close the case

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SURELY it was the responsibility of the media to probe a bit more, to seek proof and sift through the contradictory statements The question the family is asking is "Is it in anyone's interest now to show that Sanjoy is alive? Would it not embarrass all these prophets of doom who have blindly accepted such contradictory statements?"

Like twisting a knife in a wound, the media is now reporting in gory, graphic detail the torture of Sanjoy and the disposal of his body so that there is no evidence at all Is this fair to Ghose, who put his life on the line for the upliftment of Assam, or to his family? ■

(Courtesy *Dainik Hindustan*)

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS (AUGUST 24-30, 1997)

NATIONAL

August 24

- Army's Northern Command sources tell the press in Jammu about the heavy exchange of fire across the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir which was started from the Pakistan side on August 22 killing a major and a jawan The Indian retort caused heavy damage to life and military installation on the other side
- Congress President Sitaram Kesri reveals that the Prime Minister "thinks like me, talks my language and we meet frequently and have no differences"
- BJP Vice-President Madan Lal Khurana withdraws the resignation submitted by him piqued at not being reinstated as the Delhi Chief Minister
- Sandalwood smuggling don Veerappan releases eight officials of the Karnataka Forest Department, held hostage by him since July 12
- UP Congress spokesman Akhilesh Singh says in a statement that Mulayam Singh Yadav's announcement that his Samajwadi Party would have an alliance with the Congress in the next elections is "baseless and one-sided"

August 25

- Defence Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav says "India wants peace with Pakistan but our forces will definitely retaliate if Pakistan chooses to launch an offensive"
- Union Agriculture Minister Chaturanan Mishra tells *The Asian Age* "A deterioration in Congress-Left relations could derail the government" But he rules out any immediate threat
- BJP spokesman Yashwant Sinha says his party will oppose increase in petroleum prices as it shows "lack of vision" in managing the economy
- VN Gadgil, spokesman of the AICC, introduces a Private Member's Bill in the Rajya Sabha seeking a ban on the entry of foreign print medium in the Indian market
- Senior Congress leader K Karunakaran asks his party to withdraw support to the UF Government as it is inactive and non-performing

August 26

- Parliament begins its four-day special session to take stock of the nation's achievements and failures during the 50 years of indepedence Speaker of the Lok Sabha PA Sangma in his inaugural speech calls for probity, accountability and standards in public life reminding the members that every minute in Parliament costs Rs 7000
- Pakistan's Deputy High Commissioner in New Delhi charges India with jeopardising the Foreign Secretary level talks by giving such a "hype" to a "routine" incident at the Line of Control in J&K
- Bihar Chief Minister Rabri Devi gives the green signal for a CBI probe in the *dhoti-saree* scheme, launched by her husband Laloo Prasad Yadav, to give every couple below the poverty-line a *dhoti* and a *saree* for Rs 15 each
- EMS Namboodiripad, the octagenarian leader of the CPI-M, writes in *Deshabimani* denouncing Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things* for its tendentious portrayal of Communists and random references to him personally reflecting the prejudiced views of the Syrian Orthodox Church Christians

August 27

- Nine prominent personalities including nuclear scientist Raja Ramanna, film-maker Mrinal Sen and actress Shabana Azmi have been nominated to the Rajya Sabha by President KR Narayanan The list also includes noted journalist Kuldip Nayar and writer Kartar Singh Duggal
- Minister of State in the External Affairs Ministry Saleem Sherwani confirms that Prime Minister Gujral will prepone his visit to New York to meet US President Bill Clinton on September 22, 1997 Efforts are on to swap with another country the date of the Prime Minister's address to the UN General Assembly on September 22
- Several files on NDTV arrangements with Doordarshan, during the tenure of the former DG Ratikant Basu, being probed by the CBI for his allegedly suspicious role, are reported to be missing from the I & B Ministry
- Former Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar, addressing the special session of Parliament, says the Prime Minister and the Speaker should quit when they say they were ashamed and helpless and were sending wrong messages through their pronouncements making corruption the biggest issue
- Congress President Sitaram Kesri is rudely jostled and not allowed to speak at a meeting in Sultanpur (UP) where he had gone to reinstall a statue of Rajiv Gandhi which was removed by the local authorities
- Janata Dal President Sharad Yadav appoints Ram Vilas Paswan as Chairman of the party's Parliamentary Board with CM Ibrahim as Treasurer Sharad Yadav announces reconstitution of the party Secretariat with Bapu Kaldate as Secretary-General, Obeidullah Khan Azmi as Vice-President and Mrs Promila Dandavate, Wasim Ahmad, Mohan Rakesh, Dr Ravindra Kumar Ravi and Mangni Lal Mandal as General Secretaries

August 28

- Prime Minister Gujral informs the Rajya Sabha that there is a probability of his meeting with US President Bill Clinton in New York in September, only if the discussion centres around bilateral relations There is no scope for "trilateral initiative", he asserts
- Finance Minister P Chidambaram says the Income Tax Bill will be introduced in the winter session of Parliament and hopefully by next year the country "should have a brand new Income Tax Law"
- More than 13 lakh bank employees begin their two-day nationwide strike in support of their demands, bringing the entire banking business to a grinding halt

- Jain Commission, probing the conspiracy aspect of the murder of Rajiv Gandhi, submits its 2000-page interim report to the Union Home Minister
- Allotment of several hundred plots in Salt Lake from the Chief Minister's discretionary quota has been challenged in the Calcutta High Court
- Supreme Court has held in a significant judgement that if a wife does not have a source of income, it is obligatory on the husband to maintain her and the children of his marriage
- Armed ULFA militants ambush a CRPF convoy, killing four personnel and wounding nine near Nahorkatiya in upper Assam

August 29

- Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Gopinath Munde tells reporters that mosques and other religious places will be raided if the police gets information that they were being used for illegal purposes
- Special session of Parliament is extended by two days to enable the members desirous of expressing themselves on the burning issues facing the country
- Ms Bhagwati Devi and Ms Phoolan Devi take up the issue of providing livelihood to *Baheliyas* (bird-catchers) and *Madaris* (trainers of bears and monkeys for street shows) whose traditional trade has been banned by the courts, as demanded by Ms Maneka Gandhi, as tantamount to torturing the animals
- Former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda, speaking in the Rajya Sabha, stresses the need to revive the supremacy of Parliament and asks the Supreme Court to ensure that public interest litigations are decided within a time-frame
- Indian Navy decides to refer from now on as "Naval Uprising of 1946" what was so far officially called Royal Indian Navy Mutiny The uprising of February 1946 was begun on *HMS Talwar* in Bombay, spread to 56 ships, ten shore establishments and four flotillas and is considered by historians as a turning point in the struggle for freedom

August 30

- India proposes a fresh set of dates to Pakistan for the Foreign Secretary-level talks just before September 22 when US President Bill Clinton meets the Indian Prime Minister in New York
- Prime Minister Gujral meets Congress President Sitaram Kesri and assures him that India will not allow any intervention by the US in resolving the Kashmir issue
- Union Home Minister Indrajit Gupta, as the seniormost member of the Lok Sabha, moves a resolution at the special session of Parliament appealing to all parties not to nominate as their candidates persons convicted, charge-sheeted or with a criminal background, excepting those who were convicted for participation in political activities and agitations
- Veteran journalist Kuldip Nayar, in his maiden speech in the Rajya Sabha demands setting up of a Media Commission for checking the "cultural invasion" of the country by the foreign electronic media He also dwells upon the need for transparency and calls for a Bill on right to information
- Former Chief Minister of Maharashtra A R Antulay proposes a review of the Constitution and switch-over to a Presidential form of government and suggests that Parliament be converted into a Constituent Assembly

INTERNATIONAL

August 24

- Former President of Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda, is shot at by police at the National Opposition Alliance rally in Lusaka
- The *Sunday Telegraph* (London) says Queen Elizabeth II plans to go ahead with her scheduled visit to the Golden Temple and shall also visit the Jallianwala Bagh where she will place a wreath, observe a minute's silence, but shall not apologise for the 1919 massacre
- A nationwide strike across Bangladesh, called by former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party to protest against a petroleum price hike, turns violent in Dhaka as police uses tear gas and batons to disperse demonstrators and activists hurl home-made bombs at the police More than a hundred persons are reported to have been injured in several towns

August 25

- Pakistan denies any unusual activity at the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir and says the Indian propaganda "is a known Indian pattern of sabotaging the process of dialogue between Pakistan and India"
- Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif readily accepts the US proposal to meet President Clinton in New York on September 22 when the latter goes to address the UN General Assembly
- A Berlin court convicts for manslaughter Egon Krenz, who succeeded Erich Honecker as head of the German Democratic Republic government and Communist Party
- Former Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda appeals to South African President Nelson Mandela to save his life from the Zambian security forces In spite of being leader of the United National Independence Party of Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda is barred from holding the office of the President as he was born in Malawi

August 26

- Baluchistan High Court sentences Abdul Karim Nausherwani, a former provincial Minister, to two-year prison term and Ghulam Akbar Lasi, a former federal Minister to 15 days in jail, and bars both from contesting elections for the next five years, clamping also a fine of Rs 10 lakhs on each for a fraudulent wheat supply deal in 1992
- Former Prime Minister of Pakistan Benazir Bhutto lodges a complaint with the police against the ruling Pakistan Muslim League for hatching a conspiracy to kill her jailed husband Asif Ali Zardari as a provincial leader of the party has said in a published statement that Zardari would be hanged in October for involvement in the murder of Mir Murtaza Bhutto, estranged brother of Benazir

- Cambodian strongman Hun Sen vouches to stem the present crime wave, hold elections as scheduled in May next year and resign if the polls are free and fair
- Swedish leader of Opposition Carl Bildt demands that the government investigate a four-decade policy under which 60,000 people deemed genetically inferior, were involuntarily sterilised
- Former President of South Africa Frederick de Klerk, who steered the shift from Apartheid to democracy, announces his retirement from politics and resigns from leadership of his National Party
- A World Bank study *India Achievements and Challenges in Reducing Poverty*, released in Washington, says India has scored modest success in reducing poverty and recommends steps like promoting growth, cutting subsidies and higher investment in infrastructure, health and education for maintaining the 6-7 per cent growth rate which will see only 6 3 per cent of the population poor by the year 2005 instead of the present 35 per cent

igust 27

- Chairman and Vice-President of Karsan, facing extradition to India in connection with Rs 133-crore urea scam, submit a settlement proposal under which they will place $ 15 million "performance bonds" at the disposal of the Government of India by October 31, 1997 The GOI can call for due performance of urea contract with the National Fertilisers Ltd If this does not take place within a reasonable period, the NFL can draw upon the bonds as partial recovery of the $ 37 million pre-payment made to Karsan and for the balance go in arbitration before the International Chamber of Commerce in Paris On its part the GOI must withdraw the request for extradition, lift the attachment of Karsan's accounts in Pictet Bank in Geneva and secure the release of the above-mentioned officials, Tuncay Alankus and Karanci, arrested by the Interpol and jailed in Switzerland
- Chairman of the US Foreign Relations Sub-committee on the Near East and South Asia Senator Sam Brownback says in a message to Pakistan-American Society of Greater Kansas City "We could not have won the Cold War without Islamabad's immeasurable help and this is a great debt we owe to Pakistan"
- Torrential rains wreak havoc in the central Punjab province leaving thousands homeless Pakistan authorities call in the Army for rescue and relief operation
- Israeli Army seal the mosque in village Bani Naim in the West Bank alongwith the four rooms which house the offices of the Islamic Charity Association, alleged by the Israeli authorities to be a front organisation of Hamas, the biggest Palestinian movement opposed to a peace accord with Israel
- Chinese Prime Minister Li Peng, on a visit to Malaysia, says the Japanese plan to strengthen military alliance with the US was "utterly unacceptable" and it aroused suspicion not only in China but also in the South-East Asian nations
- British Secretary for Northern Ireland Mo Mowlam and Irish Foreign Minister Ray Burke agree to set up a Commission to disarm para-military groups Ms Mowlam hopes the International Commission shall be operational by September 15 when multi-party talks on the future of Ireland begin in Belfast

August 28

- Swedish daily *Dagens Nyhetar* reports that Bofors, the arms manufacturers, blacklisted since the alleged pay-off scandal in the supply of Bofors guns to India worth $ 1 3 billion, is negotiating to pay compensation to the Government of India to get themselves off the blacklist
- Bangladesh lodges an official protest with Pakistan for allowing three leaders of the 1975 coup (it was the coup which led to the murder of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his entire family, except for his daughters Sheikh Hasina Wajed, the present Prime Minister of Bangladesh, and Sheikh Rehana) to enter Pakistan and issuing them Pakistani passport
- Israeli daily *Haaretz* reveals it has obtained a secret protocol of a July 18, 1994 meeting between Yitzhak Rabin, the slain Prime Minister of Israel, and US Secretary of State Christopher Warren during which the former said he was willing to withdraw Israel's border back to where it was prior to the June 1967 war
- A federal grand jury in Washington charges former Agricultural Secretary Mike Espy with 19 counts of illegally soliciting and accepting gifts from companies his department was supposed to regulate

August 29

- Air Marshal (retd) Yaz Ahmad Khan writes in a Pakistani English daily that the US was out to weaken the Pakistan Air Force and that is why they blocked sale of F-16 Falcon fighters
- Afghan Islamic Press quotes Taliban spokesman Sayed Mohammad Haggani saying the Taliban has seized Iranian explosives and other equipment and "we warn Iran again to stop its interference"
- Cambodian King Norodom Sihanouk arrives in Cambodia after a six-month absence
- Congo (DRC) rejects a UN team sent to Kinshasa to investigate human rights abuses in the country formerly named Zaire
- Sinn Fein, the political wing of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) is officially invited to join the peace talks as British Secretary of Northern Ireland Mo Mowlam says she is satisfied that the IRA announced ceasefire since July 20 is genuine

August 30

- White House spokesman Joe Lockhart welcomes UK Government's decision to invite Sinn Fein to join negotiations on the future of Northern Ireland The Protestant leaders of Northern Ireland, however, denounce the move The Ulster Unionists, the largest pro-British party, indicate they would remain in the talks but keep them fixed on disarming the IRA
- Bangladesh Nationalist Party, the main Opposition led by Khaleda Zia, boycotts the parliament which meets for its week-long session to discuss foreign policy, law and order and to pass two bills
- President of the Palestinian Authority Yasser Arafat demands a scheduled Israeli Army withdrawal from part of the West Bank before a visit by the US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to the region
- Border town of Asmar in Eastern Afghanistan is captured by anti-Taliban forces after several hours of fighting ■

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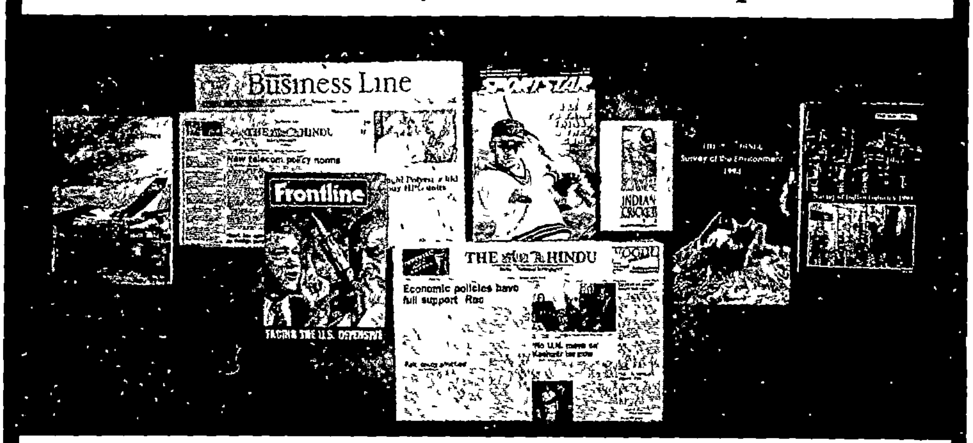

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Edited and published by Sumit Chakravartty *for* PERSPECTIVE PUBLICATIONS PRIVATE LTD, 1E/12, "Sewak House" (First Floor), Jhandewalan Extension, New Delhi-110055 Tel 7516763, 7516893 *Printed at* NEW DELHI PRINTERS, 20/7 Old Market, West Patel Nagar, New Delhi-110008 *Editor* Sumit Chakravartty *Editorial Adviser* Nikhil Chakravartty
General Manager Praveen Mehta *Executive Manager* Jasjit Kay Nagra

Mainstream

VOL XXXV No 40 September 13,1997 Rs 7

Mother Teresa

SWARAN SINGH

Fifteenth Congress of the Communist Party of China and Jiang Zemin's Vision of the Future

ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER

Indian Islam and Reform Movements after Independence

SANJAY KUMAR

Human Suffering in Jharia : Does Development Necessitate Destruction?

ARUN GHOSH'S SPECIAL ARTICLE ON LATEST MOVES IN THE PETROLEUM SECTOR : "MESSY OIL—OILY MESS"

Addressing Real Issues

It is quite evident from the state of affairs in the ruling coalition running the Union Government that even those in the I K Gujral Ministry who are competent and efficient as well as eager to bring about some improvement in the lives of our teeming multitudes have been able to do precious little in terms of tangible progress in the field of development as also in the realm of reduction in the scale and magnitude of poverty Nonetheless, what is significant is the fact that several UF leaders in the Union Government including the Prime Minister himself are conscious of the basic problems besetting the nation and unlike some of their predecessors in power have not sought to overlook those

Thus, for example, it was indeed striking to find the prestigious Western publication, the *Guardian* Weekly, of April 13, 1997, highlighting the fundamental issues confronting India in its vast countryside and categorically stating

> It is an illusion to suppose that India's future can be guaranteed by emulating Bill Gates and boosting the purchasing power of the much-expanded middle class

At the same time it came out with a highly incisive observation which one has seldom come across in Indian periodicals

> The UF Government has finally concluded that the number of Indians below the poverty line is not a barely tolerable 19 per cent (as our erstwhile Finance Minister, the distinguished Dr Manmohan Singh, insisted as a prominent member of the Narasimha Rao dispensation—S C) but at least twice as much—well over 300 million people That is a better start than anything offered by the ultra-Right or a clapped-out Congress

In his Red Fort address on August 15 this year marking the golden jubilee of our independence, Prime Minister Gujral did not only present homilies (which were, of course, there in abundance) but stressed on subjects our erstwhile heads of government have barely cared to address (and certainly not in their Independence Day speeches) One of these was universal compulsory primary education without which, he aptly underscored, no development is possible His emphasis on such questions as gender equality, women and the girl child also carried a degree of innovativeness regardless of the media's inability—on account of their obsession with "hard news"—to take due cognisance of the importance of the PM's pronouncements in these areas

Now he has given further manifestation of the same innovative spirit by spelling out his own formula to tackle the scourge of illiteracy which is assuming alarming proportions with every passing day—'each one, teach five (including two girls)' On the occasion of the International Literacy Day (September 8) he declared "Let us make it a rule that no child on doing 10+2 will get a certificate till he also produces a certificate that he made five persons—among whom two should be girls—literate "[1] There is definite merit in the criticism that such a move as the Gujral proposal would add to the already heavy burden on the slender shoulders of school students especially in their final years, as well as in the view that a system of procuring the certificates for a price may well come into operation, a situation tailor-made for corruption Also important is the feeling that by making such a suggestion the PM is trying to help the State escape its share of social responsibility However, what cannot be denied is that for all the criticisms the proposal bears a refreshingly new idea If some think this is a coercive approach, it must be pointed out that Gujral's statement was intended to help promote a genuine people's

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movement in the sphere of literacy (as in Kerala) far beyond whatever has been done till now in this sphere throughout the country in view of the burgeoning number of illiterates (At the same time the proposal is not an order that cannot be modified to prevent its misuse)

And presiding over the same function the President, K R Narayanan, while speaking with remarkable candour ("we have the disgraceful distinction of having the largest number of illiterates in the world"), highlighted the need for a mass literacy movement linked to the basic needs of life like sanitation and health awareness But more significantly, he affirmed that the Union Government was committed to accord highest priority to education and increasing the expenditure in this head to six per cent of the GNP from the current 3 9 per cent

There is no dearth of cynics in our midst Indeed a sense of cynicism has pervaded the psyche of many in the wake of the politicians' questionable behaviour and activities, not to speak of the growing menace of corruption and criminalisation of the polity Yet that should not blur our comprehension of how the present dispensation is trying to grapple with the stupendous problems confronting the nation The fact is that it is speaking of the *real* issues affecting the common people's lives and livelihood without stressing only on questions of interest for the upwardly mobile middle class How far it can translate its pronouncements into practice is a different matter But that it is projecting these *real* problems, like education and literacy, instead of dilating on phoney subjects is in itself a marked advance from the past—as noted also by the *Guardian* Weekly—and that needs to be appreciated

Despite all the failings of the United Front and regardless of the longevity of the Gujral Ministry, this boldness to understand and grapple with the *real* gut issues promises to become its most noteworthy achievement At this point of time it is necessary to strengthen this trend that does indeed provide a glimpse of the extent of transparency the government at the Centre is trying to bring about in its functioning and interactions with the public at large Beyond the murky happenings in the corridors of power thereby darkening the political horizon at present, it is this transparency which offers a bright ray of sunshine embodying hopes and expectations of a change for the better in the foreseeable future

September 10 S C

TRIBUTE

Mother of the Poor

ABHIJIT DASGUPTA

There is a saying in the Puranas which hints that there is a God in every mother Turning the proverb around, if only for its topical value, we may say that there must be a mother in God Like Teresa

Living most of her 87 years in a squalid metropolis which some call the City of Joy, Mother Teresa, if she had lived some centuries back, would have been canonised by now But thankfully, today's world has lionised her That is evident in the way human beings have prayed for her health and global attention been fixed on her every time the octagenarian nun has hovered between mortality and eternity

Global attention was the last thing on her mind when as an 18-year-old Agnes Gonxha Bejaxhia left her home to become a nun at the Loreto Abbey in Rathfaranham, Dublin Agnes found her life changing course after she undertook the voyage of destiny to India in 1929, where she was to find her God in the dying, diseased and discarded human beings she picked up from the streets and gutters of Calcutta

Born in an Albanian peasant home on August 26, 1910 at Skopje in former Yugoslavia, where her father was a shopkeeper, Agnes set out for Bengal to work with the Loreto sisters, about whom she had heard a lot But 20 years at Loreto School, which saw her travel between Calcutta and Darjeeling, still did not give her the peace she was looking for Life, and its concomitant work, meant much more to her than just shuttling and doing some services which were meant for the books of records

The view from her window at the St Anne's High School for Bengali Girls, where she was then the Principal, exposed her to the cruel truth of life in the city—man was no more than the "poor, bare, forked animal"

The stark contrast between the sprawling slum just across the boundary walls and the manicured convent gardens was glaring and her heart told her that it was among those wretched of the earth that she would find her God and true avocation

It was on a train journey between Darjeeling and Calcutta that the light dawn on her She applied to the Pope for decloisterisation which was granted in 1948, this was also the year that she took up Indian citizenship

It was then that the saga of the Mother began, picking up destitute children from the slum, treating them personally was routine, alongwith this came the door-to-door drops for alms And all this from a dingy, small room in Calcutta

She founded the Missionaries of Charity in 1950 With a few nuns, she opened her first home, "Nirmal Hriday", in 1955 in a derelict house donated by the Calcutta Corporation

But while charity may begin at home, so does hostility Trouble came by way of antagonists, the home was an affront to the then traditional Hindu society and obviously, the colour of her skin and her apparent religion came in the way

And to cap it all, the genteel Bengali could not afford to have such a home near the Kalighat temple, a place which is supposed to wash away sins Calcutta did not need any other home to get rid of its sins But one day, an incident changed all that A priest of the Kalighat temple was dying of cholera on the streets Tainted by the religious stigma of the superstitious Hindu mind, the priest was left to die of a disease that was viewed in those days as an anathema

The Mother did what almost all mothers are supposed to, but few actually offer to do She carried the dying priest in her arms and brought him back to life After that, she was the darling of the masses There was never again any question of eviction

The following years saw many more homes being set up for deserted infants, the old, lepers and mentally and physically retarded children—all by the Mother Today her order runs 90 foundations in India and 50 abroad In 1963, she founded the Missionary Brothers of Charity

Global attention was first focussed on her when she won the Magsaysay Award in 1962 And Malcolm Muggeridge's BBC interview in 1968 had her strike a chord with British viewers, who subsequently raised her a donation of 19,000 pound sterlings

In 1971, she was called to Rome to receive the first Pope John Peace Prize The same year, she was awarded the Joseph Kennedy Jr Prize for services for the mentally retarded In 1979, came the Nobel Prize

In an interview in London 1971 she threw light on how she had taken the name of Teresa Asked whether it was after St Teresa of Avila who also left her convent and founded an order, she laughed "Oh no, I've called myself not after the Big Teresa, but after the little one—Teresa of Lisieux I'm not big enough for the Big Teresa" Modesty has always been one of her bigger virtues

Untouched by all the fame and glory, she also remained completely unaffected by the bitter controversy subsequent to Channel Four's documentary, calling her "Hell's Angel" In this country too the Mother has had her detractors For one, she has been seen to be perpetuating poverty, of having mirrored Calcutta to the world as a dying city which only she has the right to save In short, she has been criticised almost like another god of Calcutta, Satyajit Ray, had been by a silver screen goddess some decades back

The life and works of the Mother attracted a lot of attention, not all of them pleasant During her last days, the Mother was embroiled in an unsavoury controversy over Dominique Lapiarre's script for an American TV serial on her life Clearly, she was hurt by the reported 'deceit' of the author, who has been brandishing a 'contract' which the Mother said was not an official one

Teresa's official biographer, 87-year-old Jesuit priest Edward Le Joly, had hoped to hand over to the Mother on her 86th birthday on August 26 a compendium of her famous sayings, compiled by him alongwith Jaya Chaliha The first copy of the book, *The Joy of Loving* published by Penguin India, was to be handed to the Mother But she was too sick to receive it

The Mother's demise (at 9 30 PM on September 5, 1997) came within a week of the death of another charismatic woman Princess Diana had recently promised the Mother that she would inaugurate an AIDS project of the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta That was a date both will not be able to keep

On the question of succession, the Mother had been accused of a certain brand of dictatorship which she, in her own caring way, has nourished as gently as she has done with the dying at "Nirmal Hriday" And when Sister Nirmala was named to succeed her, she was given the post of Superior General, not the Mother of the order Clearly, no candidate could replace Mother Teresa and so hold her title

India seems to do herself proud by having foreigners take up the cause of this country and making this their home and make a dream out of it Whoever can forget the contribution of another Mother who happened to live and die in this same country but chose the southernmost tip of this subcontinent as her home with an ex-revolutionary as her mentor? The greatness of India is how this nation has attracted the likes of these two Mothers

And we still talk of the Great Brain Drain ■

(Courtesy *The Pioneer*)

Diana and the Media

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

The tragic death of Princess Diana in a car accident in Paris on August 31 last has touched off an angry revulsion against what is known in the Western press as the paparazzi For it was known for quite sometime that Diana was being desperately pursued by the photographers who were keen on selling the picture, alone or in company, to the yellow press for a handsome price From the reports of the tragic accident received so far, these photo-hounds had been chasing her along with her beau Dodi Al-Fayed They had surrounded her car whose driver, presumably in a state of inebriation, could not cope with the situation and crashed inside a tunnel The French authorities have held the seven dare-devil photographers and the verdict is to be awaited

The point to note in all this is that the media is being blamed for the act of vulgarity which ended up in the tragic accident It is being said that if there were no indecent haste on the part of the media, perhaps Princess Diana and her friend would have been spared of the accident Such a hypothesis can certainly hold good by the 'if's and 'but's of History, but the prevailing climate in the circle of the rich and the super-rich does not permit such a hypothesis as this mad rush is part of the hi-fi life that affluence has brought not only in the West but in most parts of the now-globalised world The insanity fair that today surrounds the glamorous life-style has become a matter of deep curiosity for the common public, and to pamper to their taste, the paparazzi whisk out in their high-speed motor bike in search of the prey With all the condemnation now being showered on the photographers who were chasing Princess Diana and her party, it is necessary for us to pause and ponder if the sort of high life in which the super-affluent wallow, would it be a mistake for the common people to have the curiosity to know how they live and spend their time?

There were many strong points in favour of Princess Diana's social activities, particularly those which she had undertaken in the later part of her life And that was precisely why millions from all parts of the world have come forward to pay their tribute to her memory

But is this a panegyria for the royalty that resides in the Buckingham Palace? Rather, the tragedy that she had had to pass through in the last years of her life with all the blame being showered on her—in contrast to the regal splendour of the Palace that had been sought to be maintained all the time It was clear that in that period, she was left as the suffering angel, and had to quit the stuffy world of the royalty to choose to come to the wide world in which she made a mark with many of her social activities This endeared her to the people at large not only in her own country but many other parts of the world The tragedy that brought the end of her life—the car crash in Paris—was symbolic of the high life that the affluent have chosen to live The hi-fi that marks its steps brings its own hazards and one of them is the speed-breaking paparazzi The more and more the yawning isolation spreads between the super-rich and the common people, the curiosity to know more about their exclusive set inevitably grows and that is why the sensational tabloid journalism specialises on spreading stories—the real and the unbelievable—about the world of the super-rich

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Obviously, in the present climate of grief, the speed-breaking motor-cyclists who were chasing her to death would earn no sympathy of the world public and justice in the French court would be expected to be stern The point, however, remains—does all this settle the basic question the question of the access to information and the right to privacy? The exposure of the intrigues of Nixon which led to his fall from Presidency was hailed, and rightly, as a great achievement, and this led to a whole genre of investigative journalism which became the rage at the moment Soon, however, the intruding question cropped up, namely, the individual's right to privacy In the excitement of investigative journalism, the question of the individual's right to privacy was almost blurred, though the US Supreme Court in those days passed a number of important judgements upholding the individual's right to privacy

Over the years, the question has not been settled, one way or the other Can a person in public life have as much privacy as an individual, non-descript citizen? If one chooses to aspire for the public limelight, could or should he or she be able to be assured of respect to privacy in life? The person in public life has every right to claim as much protection of his or her privacy as any other citizen. Why should he or she be denied of that? At the same time, the public has a right to know about the hero in public life He or she can barely take refuge behind the plea that the public must not pry into his or her private life

The question can hardly be discussed as academic In our country, specifically in these days of turmoil, can a political leader amassing wealth stack it in his home and claim that the public should keep away from it all? A popular political leader may have a personal life littered with undesirable doings which the society normally condemns: should such a person claim the right to privacy? Personal lives are not really personal for the more well known Who is to decide and how? This question persists in a society in which the rule of law prevails It is quite possible that an individual personality might tell that he or she was unjustly treated but can the society or the judiciary (which by and large reflects the social mores of the time) be blamed for that? Such a question raises many challenges which are settled by the accepted norms of the times

In our country, investigative journalists have had to face many hazards. Some of those may be the outcome of long-standing customs But there are others which depend on the subjective assessment or impression of those who pass the judgement An outcast of today may be the hero of tomorrow

And yet there are certain norms which could not be defied Can a person betray the confidence of another? This is a very difficult question to answer For a journalist, the question of the right to privacy for the individual citizen has come very sharply with the rising urge for investigative journalism At some point, there is a grey area in which the individual can claim the right to privacy although all the other investigations may point to the ripping open of the right to privacy In such a case, who is the best authority to judge? If a journalist has to wait for a court judgement then the story itself may be lost, while he can hardly arrogate to himself the authority to decide what is the right to privacy for an individual

In our country, the demand for the right to information has become widespread and the present government has rightly decided to bring in a bill before Parliament for such a legislation This has become imperative because we are still subject to the time-worn British institution of the Official Secrets Act Together there has developed an active movement in some of the rural areas, particularly Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, where the right to information has become a live issue in the running of the Panchayats which are ill-informed about what the government of the day sanctions or decides for them in the legislature Even if the right to information is inscribed in the statute book, the right to individual's privacy cannot be brushed aside With the passage of time, the clash between the two concepts can hardly be avoided How do we solve it? If the parameters of the right to information are defined clearly, would it be so difficult to handle the question of the right to privacy? Not only our legislators, but active citizens will have to decide

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ON the Diana case, there would be widespread rejection of the habit of sensation-hunting photographers trying to waylay an individual, alone or in company By no code of investigative journalism, the limits can be crossed Secondly, the manner of the functioning of these sensation-hitting photographers has very little in common with an investigative journalist It is possible that the social life of the super-rich is good meat for the common citizen But such exposures can be secured without trampling upon somebody's right to privacy

Obviously it is difficult to decide where to draw the line However, responsible members of the Fourth Estate can certainly set the standards and direct their people accordingly What is badly needed today is an acceptable code of conduct for the journalist No doubt this is very difficult to draw up, and it has to be subject to variation as the situation changes But that by itself cannot be made into an excuse for the thoroughly degrading and unscrupulous way of sharing journals.

The hounds who pursued Diana may not all be newsmen. They are more likely to be mercenary photographers ready to sale their wares to the highest bidder The more such a tendency creeps into the inner precincts of journalism, the less would be its credibility and acceptability As it has happened over the ages, there has to be a genuine urge for keeping journalism as a sanctum having the sacred right to serve not Mammon but the wide world of humanity which constitutes the newsman's constituency ■

(By arrangement with *The Hindu*)

Analysing China's Fifteenth Party Congress

WILL IT ENDORSE JIANG ZEMIN'S VISION OF THE FUTURE?

SWARAN SINGH

In the backdrop of the inauguration of the Fifteenth Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in Beijing on September 12 the author presents an idea of what the meet is expected to achieve Dr Singh is a Research Fellow at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi —Editor

As 2048 delegates gather for China's five-yearly Communist Party Congress on September 12, 1997 and discuss the future policies and elect the leader for the Polit-Bureau and various other high-powered Committees which will govern China for the next five years, the world will be watching their deliberations with far greater interest than ever The trends, in fact, could already be seen from the countdown to this Fifteenth Party Congress, which had already built up a momentum of speculations of winners and losers much before the formal opening of the actual event The reason for this media-hype also lies in this being one rare occasion when dates of various preparatory meetings and Congress sessions were allowed to leak and were in circulation for quite some time Besides, this Fifteenth Party Congress has its own special significance the essence of which can be gauged from these following three basic facts

- First, this is the first Party Congress during the last two decades which will be held in the absence of China's paramount leader Deng Xiaoping and it still has a crucial say in pronouncing its decisive final verdict on the future of Deng's legacies
- Secondly, this Party Congress will also be deliberating and endorsing the new leadership's vision for the future China and it will not only provide its mandate but also map out specific directions on the basis of which the new leadership shall be conducting both its internal and external affairs
- And finally, the most important of all, this Party Congress will be putting its formal seal of approval on China's new 'third-generation' leadership which will then be put on place to guide this emerging new superpower into the next millennium

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In fact, a more open run-up for this Party Congress had started as early as January this year and the debate between the moderates and the hardliner Leftists had become fairly in open right from the funeral of Deng Xiaoping in February this year Whereas powerful orthodox Marxists criticised Jiang's bold plan to reduce the role of the state in the economy and described Deng's 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' as ideologically incorrect, Jiang Zemin went to the extent of warning the Party cadres for vigilance against this radical Leftism Occasions like the handover ceremony of the transfer of Hong Kong and the Beidaihe Summit were used by both sides to project their views on China's future formations at the top As always happened during all earlier political successions in the history of Communist China, this has also set off an unprecedented surge of patriotism with each leader taking a more radical position

And here, if the Chinese official media had openly been bombarding the public at large with President Jiang Zemin's views on various national issues, the Western media had been equally busy in projecting various Chinese leaders as aspirants for various high positions China's economic Czar and pro-reforms leader, Finance Minister Zhu Rongji, for example, has been particularly favoured by the Western press which has clearly proclaimed him as their candidate for China's Premiership next year Premier Li Peng, on the other hand, has been viewed as the brain behind China's Tiananmen Square massacre and widely expected to retire from public life following completion of his two terms as China's Premier in March next year Similarly, China's liberal minded Minister for Economic Relations and Foreign Trade, Ms Wu Yi, has also been projected as a strong candidate to replace China's high-profile Senior Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister, Qian Qichen, who might be promoted to the Polit-Bureau, that consists of the Party's innermost elite Amongst the losers, apart from Premier Li Peng at the top, various hardliner Leftists are generally expected to be sidelined during the fresh reorganisation of various Party Committees and other organs The focus of change is also very much likely to be on the new faces According to one *Xinhua* report, A contingent of outstanding middle-aged and younger cadres, full of vigour and vitality will enter the new Communist Party of China Central Committee

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As regards its singlemost important contribution to China's future, the Party Congress is expected to anoint Jiang Zemin as Deng's heir This is extremely significant because with the collapse of communism in the former Soviet Union and other countries of Eastern Europe, China represents the world's largest and most powerful communist regime and with the end of the revolutionary generation of the Long March era, the new purely civilian political leadership will be leading the most powerful communist state into the future But looking at the trends during the last few months, Jiang Zemin and his team seem the obvious choice of the future Jiang has already come out of his oft-described position of being only the 'core' of China's collective leadership and is expected to emerge more and more assertive, especially if he manages to get all his men elected to appropriate positions Taking the initiative, Jiang has already launched his campaign and placed before the nation a four-point agenda on which he would like to obtain the Congress' support and endorsement On May 29, 1997, addressing the Beijing-based Polit-Bureau members of the CPC Central Committee, Jiang had briefly outlined these four issues as (a) the Deng Xiaoping theory, (b) the initial stage of socialism, (c) economic restructuring, and (d) the building of the CPC But it is in this last category of building the Party that his campaign against corruption has emerged as his most important agenda for the future The critics, however, have described it as being used as a tool in purging and punishing some of his contenders Jiang has repeatedly cited from his six-point module of what he calls threats from "extravagance and decadence" in public life These include

- Party cadres' frequenting high-consumption entertainment places and some even so degenerated as to go gambling and whoring on public funds
- Excessive purchase of limousines and telecommunications equipment including the latest "big brother" or the mobile telephone
- Office buildings of super standard and huge funds being spent to purchase and decorate the residential quarters of Party cadres
- Unduly large number of commemorative activities in various names and uncontrolled distribution of souvenirs and gifts
- Deluge of meetings on all sorts of occasions and topics, necessary or otherwise
- Arbitrary payment of the shockingly large amounts of subsidies and allowances of various kinds in violation of relevant stipulations

Apart from his anti-corruption drive, another new formulation by Jiang describes China as being at the "initial stage of socialism" where the period from the present to the first decade of the next century will be a period of vital importance wherein China can successfully establish a fairly sound market economic structure and maintain sustained rapid economic growth But nothing has been as thorny as his views on providing greater thrust to reforms in the slumbering money-losing and huge state sector, and those have also caught the eye of storm This is one area where the Party Congress' endorsement will make a major difference In fact, experimental reforms have already been launched in about 120 state enterprises and expanded reforms are expected to reach the following five goals

- First, a batel of large-scale enterprises shall be given shape in the key fields and their role as the mainstay of the national economy brought into full limelight
- Secondly, by the end of the century, these enterprises should turn themselves into self-disciplined legal entities responsible for their own profits or losses
- Thirdly, efforts shall be made to promote a rational flow of resources to enhance the capability of these enterprises to compete in domestic and international markets
- Fourthly, steps shall be taken to gradually separate the functions of the government from those of an enterprise and confining the state's role in macro-economic regulation
- And finally, Jiang has strongly endorsed the ideal that during this transfer to market socialism in China close attention should be paid towards building a multi-layered social guarantee system throughout the country.

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BESIDES his thrust on economic growth, Jiang has also been promoting his moderate views on larger conceptual issues like nationalism which has lately come to be his another prominent preoccupation Once again much to the chagrin of the hardline Leftists, Jiang has been advocating against the parochial view of being a sovereign country and professes his full support for learning efficient management techniques from other nationalities and countries This vision of his has found particular favour amongst Western countries Also, his views on "spiritual civilisation" where people will be of one heart and one mind He, however, is fully aware of the perils of this emerging into some kind of a creed or even degenerating into another Cultural Revolution and has repeatedly urged Party cadres

(Continued on page 13)

Messy Oil—Oily Mess

ARUN GHOSH

The recent marginal increases in *some* oil product prices—diesel oil, petrol and LPG—have evoked highly mixed reactions in the media But the 'oil' problem, and the problem of pricing of crude oil, oil products and natural gas cannot be looked at in isolation The problem *must* be looked at from the point of view of the overall energy policy, indeed, in the framework of the overall economic policy This has been singularly missing in the diverse—and quite contrary—reactions among different segments of the population, among different political parties, among different sections of the media Regrettably, there is not enough focus (even among political parties opposed to the recent price hike) on the *long-term* policies being chalked out and talked about

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PERHAPS some basic bits of 'disinformation' should be corrected at the outset First, there is no free price of oil/oil products in the world The great 'free marketeers' in the Indian economy should study the cleverly administered systems in the USA, in Western Europe, indeed in all countries which are either major producers or major consumers of oil products Secondly, as of today, oil (and natural gas) have taken the pride of place in the context of primary sources of energy Though the oil reserves of the world are undoubtedly finite, new 'discoveries' of oil/gas reserves, new technology enabling better utilisation of known reserves, are constantly enlarging the horizons of oil supply in the world Third, some countries—most notably the USA—has long been an improvident user of oil products, its standard of living, its very economy (in terms of energy use) is based on a per capita consumption of oil products which, if replicated in the rest of the world, would exhaust all the currently known oil reserves of the world in perhaps less than five years US Middle East policy has always been dictated by the need for US control over the oil reserves in this area, the compulsions concerning Israel notwithstanding Of late, the USA has now got another very fruitful area for exploitation, the erstwhile USSR, where the collapse of the socialist regime has also signalled a collapse of the polity, of societal organisation, of the 'social contract' within the (ertswhile) USSR in regard to the use of the natural resources of this vast landmass for the benefit of the people of the area

The author, a distinguished economist, is a former Member of the Planning Commission

Finally, the market for oil/oil products is anything but free even for countries where product prices are not regulated, there is at best an oligopoly A few companies like Shell, Exxon and a very few others *dominate* world supply, and therefore world market prices They do fluctuate rather wildly, any hint of trouble in the Middle East, and oil prices go up sharply, and the market calms down when 'normalcy' in the possibility of production (and supply) in this area is restored These are facts of life which we must remember

How strong the oil cartel is would be apparent to anybody who has cared to study the history of the development of the Indian oil industry *India has no oil* was the refrain of Stanvac, of Royal Dutch Shell, of Indo-Burma Petroleum (after independence) They were happy to be monopoly suppliers of oil products, and when K D Malaviya tried to persuade Jawaharlal Nehru about the need for development of indigenous capability for oil exploration, it was dubbed as *waste* of scarce Indian resources by no less than TTK and VTK (under pressure from Eugene Black, the then President of the World Bank) It was only the suicidal note of President Allende which helped to tilt Jawaharlal Nehru in favour of K D Malaviya, and with the help of Kalinin (of the USSR) that Indian geologists were quickly trained up It is they who found oil at Ankleshwar, it is they who discovered Bombay High, and fortunately—since the USSR did not then have the technology of deep sea drilling—the Japanese came forward to build a platform and the other necessary facilities for the drilling of oil in the high seas

There are a few geologists and scientists of that era still alive, one has only to go to Dehra Dun and locate Majumdar But the stupidity—that is the only word one can use—the stupidity of the Government of India (where rules are made by the all-knowing bureaucrats) makes technical and scientific personnel retire at 58, when such experts are at the height of their skill and experience (In the private sector, there is *no* fixed age of retirement, the Prime Minister of India can be 78 years old, but ONGC, BHEL and other scientific/technological personnel must retire at 58, when they are at the peak of their capacity) However, that is a different story We digress

What are the compulsions in India, for India? India does have oil resources, though perhaps India is not as lucky as, say, the Middle East But one thing is certain, foreign oil companies are *not* interested in exploring for oil in India (onshore or offshore) They would be very happy to take over oilfields explored/proven by Indian agencies, for that also, there would be no takers in the North-East We do have a large number of oil/gas reserves pockets in the North-East, and the oil/gasfields handed over recently in offshore Bombay/Cambay area are quite rich There are strong *geological* possibilities of finding oil in the Bengal basin, in the high seas around the Andaman-Nicobar Islands, in Gujarat, Kutch, and offshore West Coast (apart from Godavari, Krishna/ Kaveri basins)

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A few further facts in regard to India's 'oil' supply and demand must be noted here And now, we repeat here some figures given in the *Economic Survey 1996-97* First India's crude oil production increased from 0 25 million tonnes (MT) annually, in the early fifties, to 34 09 MT in 1989-90 Thereafter, because of the earlier "flogging" of Bombay High by some individuals (anxious to take credit for high output levels)—the oil/gas ratio going up to 1 1000 (an absurd ratio) and the wastage involved in 'flared gas', with an inadequacy of gas pressure in future to help extract oil—*and* demoralisation in the ONGC/ OIL, crude oil output declined to as low a figure as 27 17 MT in 1993-94 By 1995-96, crude oil output had recovered to 35 15 MT in 1995-96

However, demand for oil products in India has been rising rapidly, especially with the new "power policy" allowing Independent Power Producers (IPPs) their choice of fuel In 1994-95, the import bill for POL (petroleum, oil and lubricants) increased by 27 per cent, in April-December 1996, the import bill for POL increased by 41 per cent as compared to April-December 1995. This was mainly due to a firming up of oil prices abroad To quote from the *Economic Survey* (p 95), "The prices of oil in the international market are highly volatile" And yet demand management, and proper planning of the production and use of alternate sources of primary energy are obviously alien to the "economic reform" policies, wherein the curent *mantra* is reliance on the market demand and supply and globalisation (The reality that oil prices and thereby oil usage are still regulated in both the USA and Western Europe is never even considered For example, gas prices in the USA are much lower than in the rest of the world, but who cares why?)

The other reality that must be noted is that in addition to crude oil (and some special lubricants), India is a large importer of diesel oil and kerosene oil In 1995-96, while domestic crude oil production was 35 15 MT, 'refinery throughput' in India was 58 6 MT In addition, we imported significant quantities of diesel oil and kerosene oil The reason is simple While different crude oils have divergent properties, and while there is *some* (though only a minor) flexibility in different proportions of different POL products one can obtain, *by and large*, one gets roughly three per cent of naphtha/petroleum, 50-60 per cent of diesel oil (taking both LDO and HSDO) and kerosene fractions, and the balance is made up of diverse other products, a large residue being ear (or pitch) used in road-making and/or heavy stock (used for power generation)

Despite the large percentage of diesel oil/kerosene oil recovered from crude oil, India has been a significant importer of both In the past, we have exported naphtha, but that is a temporary phase

Naphtha has multiple uses Aromatic naphtha can be fractionated for obtaining the basic building blocks for petrochemicals, after which the residue naphtha can be used for the manufacture of nitrogenous fertilisers, or burnt as fuel for operating thermal power stations (There is little difference between naphtha and petrol, used for running vehicles)

But heavy transportation requires more driving force than petrol can generate, and herein arises the main demand for diesel oil Incidentally, for long distance transport—as well as for bulk transport even for short distances—rail transport uses a fraction of diesel oil per tonne/mile required for road transport

In brief, the oil policy has to be intimately and organically linked to the power policy and to the transport policy And, since India is not surfeit with oil resources, the oil policy must be made an integral part of the overall economic policy, including the trade policy

The 'pricing' of oil products, in the light of the above situation, cannot (let us say *should not*) be left to the volatile international market, dominated by a few players

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THE above has been a somewhat long prologue to the main issues before us, namely, (a) the 'pricing' of oil products, (b) the planning of oil usage, (c) the planning of exploration/extraction of oil and natural gas, and their usage

There are several principles that should be enunciated at this juncture *First*, while in an unequal society, *subsidies* (to the weaker sections) are desirable, all targeted subsidies are prone to misuse, likely to lead to corruption, and sometimes to grave distortions in the production pattern For example, the very large price differential between petrol and high speed diesel oil (HSDO) has led to the proliferation of diesel passenger cars in India (In England, diesel oil and petrol prices are almost the same, per gallon)

There are, of course, two important contra considerations herein First, any increase in the price of diesel oil is likely to lead to an increase in transport costs, and therefore in all prices and the cost of living Secondly, it is but equity that those who can afford their own private passenger car should be made to pay a high price for this privilege

And yet, it is the richest who derive a special benefit from the relatively much lower price of diesel oil relative to petrol Diesel driven Mercedez-Benz owners do not deserve any great sympathy The remedy herein is a specially steep excise duty on diesel driven passenger cars, and *conversion* of petrol driven cars to diesel driven cars (by fitment of the required fuel injection equipment and other adjustments) should be prohibited by law failing that, everyone has to pay, by way of a higher diesel price

Perhaps one piece of *disinformation* should be corrected forthwith *There has not been any subsidy on diesel oil in India* What is a subsidy? A subsidy arises when a product is sold below cost The tax on diesel oil is much less than on petrol, but the sale of diesel oil has *not* been subsidised (Only the kerosene oil price involves a subsidy in India) In this context, one should see the analyses in the *Business Line*, dated June 22, 1997 and July, 1997

And yet, the argument of the Left, that the Oil Pool Account can be salvaged by lowering the duty (both import and excise) on diesel oil is not tenable *Resources are necessary foi development* Since 1991, the Government of India has been steadily eroding its tax revenue base One just *cannot* go on doing so One cannot forego the income tax, the corporation tax for higher income brackets, the high levels of excise (and import) duties on elitist consumer goods, *and* reduce duty rates on petroleum products also As it is, the government keeps pleading the excuse of inadequacy of resources for development expenditure We need more resources for the development of infrastructure The votaries of globalisation want external capital inflow (with a return varying from 30 per cent to 50 per cent) for the build-up of infrastructure This is extremely short-sighted, and unless we give up all pretence of planning, of economic development even as a goal, we must garner more resources (That does *not* justify the tax-giveaways in the 1997-98 Budget)

So, while there has been no subsidy on diesel oil, equally it would not be proper to lower the tax rate on diesel oil to make up for the deficit in the Oil Pool There is a further good reason for this As indicated earlier, the demand for oil products has been increasing at an unsustainable rate We must make more use of domestic coal, in preference to imported oil products, for power generation, for other uses Today, captive diesel gensets are being installed by industrial units throughout the country The only way to halt this (uneconomic, for the nation as a whole) trend is to raise the price of diesel oil Perhaps one should also withdraw the freedom to set up captive gensets (for power) by indsutrial units

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WE come to the problem of kerosene oil True, kerosene oil is used largely by the poor, both for lighting and as fuel And yet, unfortunately, the subsidised price of kerosene oil has led to its large scale misuse (by truck drivers, especially) *Targeted subsidies* are apt to be misused, certainly, such subsidies lead to corruption, to deliberate lawbreaking, to the negation of the very purpose of the subsidy Kerosene prices also should have been raised, the failure to do so can be ascribed to election politics So, let us face the reality, the policy is *not* based on any major consideration for the poor, it is based on electoral calculations

Herein, there arises a problem If a bold 'Right to Work' were to be seriously implemented (for capital construction by the village *panchayats* and the urban *nagar palikas*), the minimum effective wage even in the informal sector would increase, and heavy subsidisation of essential articles of direct consumption would no longer be necessary The poor can bear a higher price of kerosene oil, provided the overall policies increased their income (We should still subsidise primary education and health care, but that is a different matter.) A *positive* approach to development is always to be preferred to an 'eameliorative' approach The latter only smacks of the arrogance of looking down on the problems of the poor as it were We should *educate* our people better, give them better health care, better employment opportunities

So, what emerges? A correction in oil product prices has long been overdue, indeed, the erstwhile Congress Government evaded the issue for long years (during which period world prices of crude oil increased from $ 12-14 per barrel to around $ 22-24 per barrel of late) The correction has been long delayed, and the correction is essential if only because we need to temper the galloping demand for oil products But, as will be discussed later, the correction *should be gradual,* step by step Shock therapy—of the type that 'globalisers' would recommend—is the worst therapy

The Oil Pool Account

In India, the price of crude oil paid by the government to the ONGC has been significantly lower than world prices (At $ 10 per barrel, it has still been higher than ONGC costs but at times less than half the import price) The 'cess' on oil was supposed to be used for 'development' of the oil industry, including oil exploration, and the exploitation of new oil resources discovered Add the various duties and the profits of the IOC, 'oil and oil products' have been a source of significant revenues for the government over the years

The problem commenced fairly early under Dr Manmohan Singh's tenure as the Finance Minister The Funds available with the Oil Coordination Committee were 'raided'—'plundered' would be a more appropriate word The surplus (in the Capital Account of the Oil Pool) was transferred to the revenue account of the Cental Budget, to reduce the 'fiscal deficit' One's memory plays tricks, but over a period of two years, some Rs 5000-6000 crores were thus misappropriated

While this was happening, the world prices of oil were also rising So were our imports relative to domestic production Came a time when the IOC had no money to import crude oil Of late, External Commercial Borrowing (ECB) has had to be resorted to by the oil companies—cheerfully approved by the mandarins in the Finance Ministry—in order to keep up refining crude oil and supply oil products as per demand (Recall the remark of the Petroleum Secretary to the press that his job was to ensure supplies of petroproducts to all consumers as demanded, at the going price, including naphtha for new power companies In short, his job did not require any energy planning or energy policy) That is how the Oil Pool deficit has grown over the years, first through a 'raid' on the existing balance, later by refusing any adjustment of prices net of taxes and also freely importing (at a high price) whatever was demanded

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One needs to take a fresh look at the *thinking* in circles that matter, and the *naive* thrust for equating domestic prices to international prices (Actually, the seeds were laid when, while handing over proven reserves and existing ONGC installations at Mukta/Panna *free* to Enron/Reliance and Ravva to Videocon and their partners, the government contracted to buy ckrude oil/natural gas at international prices, *not* at the prices then being paid to the ONGC/OIL *The Pioneer,* dated September 3, 1997, calls it "Bold Restructuring" in its editorial and asserts that the Administered Pricing Mechanism is an anachronism in a liberalised economy The Editor of *The Pioneer* obviously is not aware that the prices of petroproducts are anything but "free" (and market determined) even in the USA, and that to allow petroproduct prices to "float" would seriously jeopardise basic production and economic activity in India, since infrastructure prices (like transport charges) cannot be changed on a daily or weekly basis *The Economic Times,* dated September 2, 1997, carries the banner headline "Petroleum Sector takes a giant leap towards freedom" Freedom from whom and for what? Petroproducts make for a clean fuel The capital cost of a thermal power plant based on petroproducts would also be lower than the capital cost of a coal based plant (for the coal handling, processing plant would no longer be necessary) Environmental pollution would also be less, and no electrostatic precipitators (ESPs) would be necessary There would be less labour required What if the fuel cost is higher? All prices (of power to be sold to SEBs) are now to be calibrated to costs anyway, with a decent enough margin With naphtha for fuel, for example, a Plant Load Factor of ninety per cent or more is easily attained, and there is now a standard bonus of 0 7 per cent of return for every percentage point PLF in excess of 68 5 per cent With a minimum return of 16 per cent at 90 per cent PLF, the return on capital invested is in excess of 31 per cent So, the only "freedom" now guaranteed is to foreign investors to choose their fuel, no matter what the cost is to the Indian people

Did the Petroleum Secretary even remotely consider the likely impact on India's balance of payments of the type of policy he was actively pursuing? Does this "giant leap towards freedom" ensure competition? Is a power price of something like Rs 5 per unit likely to spur the development of the Indian economy? Would Indian industry be competitive with power being sold at this price? At Rs 36 per US dollar, the price of power (at Rs 5/unit) would be around 13 cents/unit The bulk consumers in the USA pay something like 4 cents, ordinary consumers 7 cents/unit In Canada, the rates are much lower (being primarily based on hydro-power)

Whose freedom are we guaranteeing and freedom for what? Economic journalism in India has reached a nadir of ignorance, self-deception, and arrogant disinformation By and large, the media no longer represent either the aspirations or the interests of the people of India

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THERE is yet a wholly different perspective The partial corrective in oil prices is likely to make only a marginal difference to the Oil Pool deficit (*reported* to be Rs 22,000 crores) In regard to an amount of Rs 18,000 crores *not* covered by the price adjustments), the Government of India would issue *bonds* to the oil companies, "which will completely wipe out the deficit", and according to *The Economic Times*, dated September 2, 1997, this is "an elaborate accounting exercise with which all parties appear satisfied"

The *Business Line*, dated September 4, 1997, however, says that this amounts of "Robbing Paul to pay Paul" The *Business Line* article has much to commend itself And yet, in the final analysis, what does it amount to? It amounts to *buying time* The adjustment has to be made, not as a one-time shock, but over a period of five to seven years Essentially that is what this 'sleight of hand' in accounting amounts to Shock therapy is not necessarily a good remedy for all patients, especially for weak patients A corrective to wrong policies over the past six years' mistakes can only be taken over a period, whether that period should be four years or seven years can be argued In a sense, therefore, and *in principle*, a time-bound resolution of the problem (such as envisaged) is not a bad remedy, just because it merely postpones the solution As long as there is will to really solve the problem over time

Whether the adjustment will ever be made over the next five to seven years is an open question If, as *The Economic Times* suggests, the Sundararajan Committee would want 'globalisation of all oil product prices' within a period of two years The Oil Pool deficit could be wiped out earlier If prices slump, the situation would change Whether the recommendation of the Committee would be accepted is an open question

Would such a policy (of globalised oil prices) be even desirable? We go back to the beginning No developed country in the world has a *totally free* oil price scenario The viewpoints of the oil producers/oil consumers are sharply divergent India is both a producer and an importer of oil It has to have a programme of development consistent with its resources, and consistent with certain other imperatives Is the globalisation of all prices in India's interest? Is privatisation of the oil industry in India—already initiated—in India's interest? Can India depend on international demand and supply and international capital for its development programme? These are large questions, basic questions which cannot be addressed in this essay

But one conclusion is clear Any view on the question of oil pricing and the development of oil resources, cannot be taken in isolation It has to be a part of an overall energy policy, an overall development policy

But then, the question that arises, the question that should really be debated, is does the Planning Commission have such an overall view? And is the present Government of India committed to accepting such an integrated view?

One could legitimately have some doubt on both the above questions Therein lies the real problem Oil is a messy product, not handling it properly can make a real mess of the entire environment ■

SWARAN SINGH Fifteenth CPC Congress

(Continued from page 8)

for a down-to-earth approach and to guard against "rushing headlong into a mass reaction" In fact, a 24-member Central Leading Committee for the Building of Spiritual Civilisation has already been set up following a resolution to that effect that was passed as the Sixth Plenary session of the CPC Central Committee last autumn which had already set the tone on the rise of President Jiang Zemin

Yet, in the end, considering that in China life and politics function on the basis of the *guanxi* principle, the new leadership will have to find its own way and means to implement its vision of the future After taking all the historic decisions during this one-week session the Party Congress will become virtually non-functional for the next five years And it is precisely the short and decisive nature of this five-yearly meeting that makes it so much crucial in determining the policies and leadership formations that will rule the China of the future ■

HUMAN SUFFERING IN JHARIA

Does Development Necessitate Destruction?

SANJAY KUMAR

Over the past fifty years development has been the major thrust of our policy-framers All planning, each action and every project of the government is generally aimed at social and economic development of the country The planners enumerate a long list of benefits and advantages ranging from economic prosperity to employment generation that are supposed to accrue from the project while conceiving a plan A few years after the implementation of such projects the officials even come out with fancy data of social and economic benefits provided to the people in the concerned area But rarely do they care to highlight the dark side of any developmental project which on numerous occasions has led to large-scale displacement of people leading to immense hardships

If projects like Hirakud, Bhakhra Nangal or Rihand dams made available water and electricity to the people, they also led to the displacement of a large number of families who could seldom be rehabilitated In recent years the Narmada dam adds to the tale of human sufferings due to mega projects It is not only the dams which lead to human suffering, but other projects as well engender a chain of human hardships The Bhopal gas disaster took place due to the emanation of the deadly methyl isocyanate gas from the factory of the Union Carbide Corporation which had been set up to meet our developmental needs The coalfields also figure in the list of development projects leading to disaster and destruction The Chaasnala or Gajlitand disaster may have faded from human memory, but the people of Jharia, who have suffered immense loss just a few months back due to reckless mining by the Bharat Coking Coal Limited (BCCL) which own the right of mining in the area, are helplessly awaiting a greater disaster ahead But the basic question remains will development always lead to destruction or is there a way out?

The people of Jharia, a small coal town of South Bihar, are the victims of such a developmental project run by the BCCL Even before they could overcome the nightmare of October 28 last year, they have been served with eviction notices by the BCCL, which owns the right of mining in and around Jharia While the people put the blame on the BCCL authorities for the land subsidence (*bhudhasaan*) that evening leading to immense damage of property and demand adequate compensation for the loss, the BCCL has served them eviction notices declaring them to be illegal occupants Serving eviction notices to illegal occupants by officials is a common practice, but similar notices to people living for more than half a century and having valid *pattas* for the land is something unheard of People in general have been taken aback and the contention between the people and the BCCL is to be resolved by the Supreme Court as the Jharia Bachao Abhiyaan Samiti, a committee formed by the affected people, is ready to file a public interest litigation petition with the apex court The question is are the occupants really encroachers or is the BCCL trying to evade the real issues?

It was about 6 00 PM on that fateful day when the people of the Hussainabad locality heard a loud sound and soon cracks developed in many houses of the entire area of Hussainabad, Kathras More, Chauthai Kuli, Sadhan Kothi covering an area of about 2 5 to three kilometres Initially the cracks were not very wide, but they kept on widening till the late evening and developed in almost all houses The count may add up to more than 300 houses After the rains which followed in the late evening, these cracks were more clear and visible These cracks appeared all over the house, on rooftops, the walls and even the surface got separated Some cracks are as wide as seven to eight inches making it simply impossible to live inside There is always a danger of these houses or a part of them collapsing Some houses have even tilted The people could soon realise it to be a case of land subsidence (*bhudhasaan*) Completely terrified, the people came out of their houses and ran to safety Some people who had some alternate arrangements immediately shifted their families to safer places nearby But as

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a large number of the affected families are daily wage earners and labourers, they are left with no other option but to again move inside their badly depleted houses

What may have Caused the Damage

THOUGH the finer points of the cause of such land subsidence (*bhudhasaan*) could not be accurately ascertained, it is almost certain that it was caused due to the heavy underground blasting of coal in the Jharia coalfields The underground bed of Jharia township is full of prime coking coal considered to be the best quality of coal

Jharia has a long history of coal-mining which dates back to the mid-1930s when the erstwhile Raja of Jharia, Shiv Prasad, in 1933 leased these underground coal mines to private hands As per the agreement, the coal miners will have no right to the upper surface of the land and any damage to it has to be compensated During that time very few lived on surface land, but after sometime the Raja leased the surface to others on which farming and human settlement started in a much bigger way Coal-mining remained in private hands for a long time, and it was only with the nationalisation in 1971 that these mines came under the ownership of the government

Earlier open cast was the most prevalent technique of coal-mining which led to the destruction of the upper surface as well making it totally unusable after mining But with the development of the new technique, open cast mining was replaced by underground inclined mining In this new technique, mining is done as deep as 250-300 feet below to protect the surface land Coal is extracted using high explosive to blast the coal To give support to the upper surface, as per the mining rules, it is required to leave underground pillars of the width of 100 feet at every specified distance Further, the hollow area after the digging of coal is to be filled by sand to provide more support to the surface Nearly 60 years of continuous mining has led to the depletion of the coal resources in and around the Jharia coalfield But it is alleged that the pressure to produce more and more coal has led to the slashing of these coal pillars totally neglecting the safety norms of these mines It is even alleged that the sand filling in the vacant areas has not been done properly in these mines and contractors have made huge amounts of money while making the township absolutely vulnerable It is not hidden from anybody that the whole of Jharia township stands on such numerous pillers

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IT is widely believed that though the BCCL authorities are aware of such underground conditions, they could not resist their temptation to extract more and more of this invaluable coking coal Assessing the worth of this valuable coal, there have been plans to shift the whole township of Jharia to a nearby place and by open cast method dig out the entire coal from the area since inclined underground mining with all safety specifications needs a large amount of coal to be left underground in the form of pillars to support the surface A similar plan was conceived in 1984, which required a large amount, but somehow or the other it could not be implemented and people continued living on this pillar township On the other hand, the BCCL's underground mining went on unabated

It was in Inclined Mine No 9, on that fateful day, due to heavy blasting that one of the pillars subsided Naturally other pillars, which also do not conform to the safety specifications, could not bear the weight of the surface land and the surface area of about three kilometres subsided slowly for about three to four hours The terrified people ran out of their houses in panic and demonstrated on the road in protest Soon the district administration alongwith the BCCL authorities surveyed the affected area and Mine No 9, and ordered that the mine be closed

Mining has been stopped in this colliery, but who was to compensate for the immense loss of the people most of whom are either daily wage earners or labourers working in these mines? Many of these houses have been damaged beyond repair and it is practically impossible to live inside The Jharia Bachao Abhiyaan Samiti, a committee of the affected people with M C Parmanik as their leader, has demanded adequate compensation and proper rehabilitation for the people of Jharia Various committees visited the affected areas and met the people The Vidhan Parishad Paryavaran Samiti promised adequate compensation to the affected people, but the mines safety experts have declared the entire area unsafe for human settlement The Jharia Bachao Abhiyaan Samiti submitted a charter of demands calling for adequate compensation to all affected families, proper rehabilitation for all the people of Jharia, a minimum of five decimal land for each family and job for at least one member of every family

The BCCL soon moved into action and served eviction notices to the people of Jharia, declaring them to be illegal occupants and asking them to evacuate The people in general, many of whom have been living there for more than 50-60 years with receipts of valid *pattas* for their land, were taken aback It cannot be denied that many of the daily wage earners are not the legal owners of the land, but it is true that they have been living there for as many as 30 years or more The BCCL has asked the people to move out of the land as soon as possible But those persons are in no mood to leave the place where they have been living for so long, without adequate compensation and proper rehabilitation

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RECENTLY the BCCL even declared the Dharam Nagar, Indra Nagar and Samsher Nagar areas as unsafe and asked the people to move out of those areas Though it cannot be denied that the region is unsafe for human settlement, the people allege that the BCCL is trying to terrorise the people day after day serving them with eviction notices The Samiti claims that the surface is owned by the individuals as the agreement clearly states that the mine owner has no right to the surface and any damage thereof has to be compensated by the mine owner By declaring these settlers as illegal encroachers the BCCL has put the ball in the people's court Samiti leader Parmanik elaborated their plan to file a writ under public interest litigation in the Supreme Court shortly to establish their right to ownership of their land which they are confident of proving since most of them possess valid receipts for their land But the big question is even if they succeed in establishing their right to ownership of the surface land, is the entire Jharia township safe enough for human settlement? Frequent mine accidents in recent years in these coalfields definitely puts a question mark on the proper maintenance of the mines' safety norms in these coalfields

So after this first round of battle in the Supreme Court regarding the ownership issue, another struggle is imminent for the people of Jharia They have to unitedly put pressure on the BCCL and the government for adequate compensation and ensure proper rehabilitation of all the people at a safer place nearby Recently some of the affected people have been provided some relief ranging from a minimum of Rs 500 to a maximum of Rs 10,000 per family But this is not enough to mitigate the immense suffering of these poor people What is imperative is for the BCCL to take greater care for mines safety so as to avoid any such crisis in future It must, in coordination with the State and Central Governments, plan out a reasonable rehabilitation programme for the people of Jharia

If properly rehabilitated on time, the people of Jharia may be saved from the greater disaster ahead awaiting the coalfield A reasonable compensation may even open up new avenues for the people But this may not put an end to the basic problem of developmental planning which on numerous occasions has led to immense destruction and human suffering A reconciliatory method is the need of the hour and this must on one hand assess the need for higher production and on the other take into account the people's needs The problem can be best addressed if the planners get their priorities right All developmental politics must reflect the priorities which the common people attach to their daily life ■

(This report has been written after the field survey of the entire affected area of Jharia by the author himself The author wishes to thank M C Parmanik, Deepak, Naresh, A P Singh and all others who helped him in collecting the relevant information)

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Editor, *Lal Parcham*
4A/3, Dhillon Marg
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Patiala-147001

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Editor, *Lok Dasta*
F-5/79, LIG Flats
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Indian Islam and Reform Movements in Post-Independence India

ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER

We have to take stock of various developments which took place in India in the last fifty years of our independence It is also important to take stock of developments among the Muslims in this period, specially with reference to the reform movements in Indian Islam

India opted to be a secular country and this decision had several repercussions Right at the stage of Constitution-making there were debates about a uniform civil code There were heated discussions Muslim members opposed the adoption of a uniform civil code Ultimately a compromise was accepted It was decided to put it under the Directive Principles of the Constitution while allowing the personal laws of all the communities to apply in the meantime.

This was done at the intervention of Jawaharlal Nehru The top leadership of the Indian National Congress including Gandhiji and Nehru had given assurances to the leaders of *Jami 'at-ul-'Ulama-i-Hind* that no Islamic laws will be abolished after independence It is important to note that the orthodox 'Ulama led by Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani had vehemently opposed the two-nation theory and fully supported the cause of composite nationalism Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani, a theologian of great eminence, was particularly in the forefront of opposing the two-nation theory and he had successfully countered it on theological grounds They had assured the Muslims that they need have no apprehensions about freedom of religion in India after independence They will be free to follow their religion and its laws

It was because of this that the leaders of freedom movement ultimately put uniform civil code among the Directive Principles Had it been imposed right then, it not only would have been against the assurance given to 'Ulama; it would also have given handle to the supporters of the two-nation theory that Islam is not free in India Thus the view that a uniform civil code could have been implemented while framing the Constitution ignores these aspects of the problem In fact it was as difficult to implement it then as now, though for different reasons

Not enforcing a uniform code then was quite reassuring for the Muslims It is important to note that partition was a great tragedy for the Indian Muslims for several reasons It not only divided their families but it also caused migration of the cream of their society, specially those from UP, to Pakistan Thus the Muslims almost lost their middle class intelligentsia to Pakistan leaving behind poor and illiterate Muslims completely under the influence of conservative theologians The Muslims in India have still not recovered from this tragedy To create a new intelligentsia and a strong middle class will take quite some time The process has begun but it is far too slow All the available data clearly show that Muslims are far behind others both in the field of education and economic progress This surely does not augur well for a reform movement It needs an educated and economically secure middle class for the advocacy of modern reforms

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THE pre-independence period when the Muslims had a strong middle class produced several eminent reformers Sir Syed Ahmad Khan was the first among them He developed a systematic methodology of re-interpreting the Qur'an and his insights were of great help to bring about a change in the outlook of the Muslims Several other reformers like Justice Ameer Ali, Nawab Muhsinul Mulk, Maulvi Khuda Bakhsh and others followed him In fact Maulvi Khuda Bakhsh suggested several measures to bring about reforms in Muslim personal law Another eminent thinker and reformer was Maulvi Mumtaz Ali Khan who wrote a book, *Huququn Niswan* (Rights of Women) In fact his ideas about the rights of women in Islam were so radical that even Sir Syed advised him not to publish his book But the Maulvi did publish it

Thus it is not true that Indian Islam did not produce reformers In pre-independence India even conservative 'Ulamas like Syed Suleman Nadvi and Maulana Ashraf Thanvi took the initiative to usher

Dr Engineer is the Chairman, Centre for the Study of Society and Secularism, Mumbai in some necessary reforms Maulana Ashraf Thanvi even wrote a book in Urdu to suggest some measures strictly within the framework of Shari'a to help women, specially in cases like child marriage, option of puberty, disappearance of husband for a long time, etc And it was at the initiative of these 'Ulamas that the 'Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act' was passed in 1939 which gave great relief to those women whose husbands had disappeared without a trace In Hanafi law the waiting period is 90 years in case of disappearance of a husband which was more than the natural age of a woman in India It was reduced to four years as per the Maliki School

However, in the post-independence period this initiative for reforms was lost for reasons listed above The 'Ulamas who came on the scene after those who had participated in the freedom struggle had no mass base and were quite unsure of their prestige This apart, some of them began to politicise these issues in order to promote their own interests Also, as time wore on the politics of religious, caste and regional identities became more and more important

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In the mid-sixties a Lohiaite socialist from Maharashtra, Hamid Dalvai, launched a campaign for the enforcement of a uniform civil code He also declared himself to be a non-believer and even maintained that Muslims are basically fanatics and rigid and would never change Such extreme positions on the part of Hamid Dalvai did great disservice to the cause of reforms His campaign was totally misconceived and helped the conservatives to adopt more rigid positions They launched a counter-campaign and convinced the Muslims that there was a 'conspiracy' to destroy Islam It was in response to Dalvai's campaign for a uniform civil code that the Muslim Personal Law Board was formed in the mid-sixties and this became a bulwark against any change or reform in the Muslim personal law

It is important to note here that any movement for reforms, if it has to succeed, should be first within the framework of the religious scripture and, secondly, the reformer should be persuasive and use proper strategies to convince his fellow-religionists Raja Rammohan Roy, for example, was a great scholar of the Hindu religion and quoted from Vedas to prove that there was no concept of *sati* in it and that it should be discontinued in order to uphold the original teachings of Hinduism Sir Syed, Maulvi Mumtaz Ali Khan, Maulvi Khuda Bakhsh and others of their ilk also adopted similar strategies They wanted to bring reforms within the framework of Islam However, Hamid Dalvai, being a non-believer, completely disregarded the religious sensibilities of the Muslims and mounted an attack on Islamic laws It became totally counterproductive and rigidified positions Any movement for genuine reform in Muslim personal law became more problematic In such an atmosphere even a scholar of Islam and a legist like A A A Fyzee found it difficult to argue for reforms

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It is interesting to note that Pakistan went ahead with the necessary reforms in Muslim personal law Ayub Khan appointed a committee to recommend reforms which consisted of both the modernists and the 'Ulamas The committee recommended necessary reforms after taking the opinion of the people through a questionnaire and Ayub Khan implemented them through a Presidential ordinance in 1962 ignoring a dissenting note by one of the 'Ulamas Even Zia-ul-Haq could not dispel this ordinance during his hey-days of fundamentalism

This became possible in Pakistan as it had a strong middle class to advocate reforms and also the Muslims were in an overwhelming majority and there the theory of conspiracy against Islam could not work In all Muslim countries from Indonesia to Algeria reforms have been effected The Qur'anic laws are quite favourable in terms of women's empowerment but since the medieval ages these Qur'anic injunctions have been interpreted in such a way as to perpetuate male domination For this purpose even some controversial hadiths were used superceding the Qur'an Thus proper interpretation of these Qur'anic provisions can greatly help in giving women their much-needed rights And this is precisely what has been done in most of the Muslim countries

In India increasing communalisation of politics made it even more difficult to usher in reforms in Muslim society Communalisation reached its peak during the eighties when a series of major communal riots took place making the Muslims more and more insecure It was during this period that the controversial Supreme Court judgement on maintenance—popularly known as the Shah Bano judgement—was delivered

The members of the Muslim Personal Law Board and other Muslim leaders reacted sharply against this judgement and launched a massive movement against it Unfortunately, one of the otherwise more sober Muslim leaders and the President of the Muslim Personal Law Board even likened this movement to the Khilafat Movement during the early twenties The Shah Bano movement was a great mistake Such an aggressive attitude towards a reformative measure was not called for It only hardened majority communalism and caused greater harm to the Muslims

The Shah Bano movement dashed all hopes for reform in Muslim personal law Perhaps the Supreme Court judgement came at a wrong time By the mid-eighties the Muslims were feeling intensely insecure due to major communal riots at Moradabad (1980), Biharshariff (1981), Baroda and Meerut (1982), Neili, Assam (1983), Bhivandi-Mumbai (1984) and Ahmedabad (1985) The opportunist leaders exploited this intense feeling of insecurity among Muslims to oppose the Supreme Court judgement It was certainly not against the Qur'anic spirit though delivered under the provision of a secular law

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Now the political atmosphere has considerably changed There is a perceptible improvement in the communal situation Even the politicians find it difficult to get an enthusiastic response from the people on communal issues The BJP also has failed to get any response on emotional issues like the construction of temples Moreover, the women's movement in all communities is gaining in strength even though there still are formidable problems There is also a move among a section of the Muslim women to devise a *nikahnama*, that is, stipulation of conditions against triple divorce and polygamy in the marriage contract Such a *nikahnama* in fact has already been prepared with the help of legal experts in Mumbai

Also, a group of Muslim intelligentsia has prepared a draft bill for setting up Muslim family councils at State and district levels stipulating necessary reforms These are constructive measures but have yet to gather the necessary thrust The attitude is still sheepish Muslim women are still not taking the much-needed initiative The Personal Law Board, on the other hand, consists of highly orthodox people It will not agree to any reform until it comes under great pressure So far it has turned down all requests for reforms

But one need not despair Reforms cannot be postponed for long The provision for triple divorce must go and polygamy should be either abolished or severely restricted It should also be noted that in every society contradictory trends of orthodoxy and religious reforms exist It depends on the balance of social forces which trend will get the upper hand The balance of forces can be tilted in favour of reforms if there is the requisite will to do so ■

India's Freedom Struggle : Role of Communists

M. FAROOQI

M Farooqi, a veteran freedom fighter and CPI leader, breathed his last in New Delhi on September 3, 1997 Farooqi had been active in politics since 1936, when he was a student of St Stephen's College, Delhi University He joined the University in 1934 after his matriculation, and did his MA in History in 1940 Then he joined Law, while continuing to be a student of St Stephen's

In November 1940, he led the Delhi students' strike protesting severe British repression against the Left in particular It was also a protest against Jawaharlal Nehru's arrest The strike was complete in all colleges (including in St Stephen's), and in several schools of the Capital This was the first ever political strike in the history of Delhi University

Farooqi was at that time the President of the Delhi Students' Federation, a unit of the All India Students' Federation (AISF) formed in 1936 at the all-India conference held in Lucknow The conference was inaugurated by Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Congress President, and presided over by M A Jinnah, who till then continued to be in the anti-imperialist national mainstream

This strike so much angered the then Vice-Chancellor of the University, Sir Maurice Gwyer (he was also the Chief Justice of the Federal Court of India, later the Supreme Court), that he expelled Farooqi from the University and also forfeited his MA degree Interestingly, Farooqi's MA degree was restored to him in 1989 at the University convocation, that is, 49 years after it was taken away The convocation was presided over by Dr Shankar Dayal Sharma, the then Vice-President of India and Chancellor of Delhi University

That was how Delhi University honoured Farooqi on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of Indian independence This was at the initiative of Dr Shankar Dayal Sharma himself who made a proposal to this effect to the then VC, the late Prof Moonis Raza

After his expulsion Farooqi became a wholetime political activist, was imprisoned thrice in the freedom struggle, including in the "Quit India" movement Farooqi was later elected the Secretary of the Delhi CPI (a post he held for 25 years at a stretch) before becoming an integral part of the CPI's national leadership Farooqi always eschewed sectarianism and strove his best to unite the Left despite the CPI-M's 'holier-than-thou' approach which he deeply resented in his quiet, dignified manner totally alien to the dogmatic die-hard 'revolutionary phrase-mongers' He died a serving member of the CPI's Central Secretariat His wife Vimla Farooqi is a leading figure in the Indian women's movement while daughter-in-law Saba is emerging as a prominent leader of women's struggles in Delhi His son Amar is a Lecturer in History at Hansraj College, Delhi University As a mark of tribute to Farooqi, the tallest Communist leader of Delhi, Mainstream *is publishing his article, written on the occasion of the golden jubilee of Indian independence, that appeared in the CPI's organ* New Age —Editor

Two Hundred Years of Battle for Freedom

India fought the British rulers for nearly two centuries, beginning with the battle of Plassey (in Bengal) in 1757 and culminating in 1947 when on the 15th of August the Union Jack of our slavery was hauled down and the Tricolour flag of freedom was hoisted by Jawaharlal Nehru on the ramparts of Delhi's historic Red Fort On that day our country took a new historic turn We are now in the fiftieth year of that memorable event

With their victory in Plassey against Siraj-ud-daula, the then ruler of Bengal, the British established a powerful base in India, and became a significant factor in our political system With the gradual decline of India's central authority of the Moghuls in Delhi, the British were able to spread their tentacles far and wide, and by the first quarter of the nineteenth century had already emerged as the most powerful factor However, the resistance to the foreign rule continued in various forms, in various parts of the country

Eighteen fiftyseven marked a turning point There were simultaneous uprisings against British rule in several parts of the country Bahadur Shah Zafar, the last Moghul emperor, was accepted by the freedom fighters of 1857 as the central figure, even though symbolically

The British rulers and their historians call it the "Mutiny" of 1857 But Karl Marx, while writing on India, termed it as the "First War of Independence" against British rule

With our defeat in 1857, the British became the sole political power of our country The rule of the East India Company was replaced by direct British rule India became the jewel in the British Crown Our resources were now at the disposal of the imperialist rulers, to be exploited to make Britain the most powerful empire in the world, widely spread on all continents and on which the "sun never sets" The British enjoyed that position till the Second World War (1934-45)

However, the spirit of our resistance never died It took a new shape in the post-1857 period In describing British rule in India, Karl Marx had made a brilliant formulation As he put it the British became the "unconscious tool of history" The impact of modern world civilisation (capitalist till then) on Indian development in the nineteenth century was considerable One of its results was that modern education reached certain sections of our feudal-ridden society A new English-educated class was coming up, however slow the process may have been Bengal was the first part of the country to have had a modern renaissance in the nineteenth century, with Raja Rammohan Roy as its foremost standard-bearer It also influenced the coastal regions of India (Madras and Bombay Presidencies as they were then called) in particular

Its inevitable result was that the new educated class started raising the demand for some share in political power

Modern Phase of Freedom Struggle

It is against this background that the Indian National Congress was founded in 1885 This is the oldest political party in India, perhaps in the Third World also Its formation marked the beginning of the modern phase of our freedom struggle In the beginning, its base was confined mainly to urban centres which were witnessing the emergence of a modern educated class The Congress held its sessions annually, passed resolutions demanding that the British set up some kind of legislative bodies, as well as adopt measures to Indianise the services, at least to an extent It is the moderates who were then dominant in the leadership of the Congress They pursued peaceful and constitutional methods to gain their objectives

The situation, however, began to change in the first decade of the present century, after the partition of Bengal along communal lines in 1905, masterminded by the crafty British Viceroy Lord Curzon He was implementing the line of *"divide and rule"* to maintain the colonial rule The imperialists encouraged the formation of communal parties, the Muslim Conference of Sir Agha Khan and the Hindu Mahasabha, to undermine the growing influence of the Indian National Congress The Muslim League falls in a different category Actually, Sir Agha Khan's Muslim Conference was a British prop to counter the Muslim League

The partition of Bengal triggered an angry protest movement across the country in various forms, demanding reversal of the vicious step taken by the imperialist rulers Inside the Congress leadership itself two distinct trends emerged Gokhale and some others wanted constitutional means to be pursued to attain political power On the other hand, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bipin Chandra Pal and Aurobindo Ghosh wanted radical methods to be adopted to fight the foreign rule Incidentally, Jinnah was a follower of Gokhale

This was also the time when well-known militant formations Anushilan and Jugantar were formed in Bengal to fight the British with arms The rulers called these organisations *"terrorists"*, a term that continued to be used throughout till the thirties in our political literature, also in the media

It may be mentioned that Shri Aurobindo Ghosh was with the Jugantar group

In the anti-partition agitation Tilak was jailed for six years and sent to Burma This led to widespread protest in the country A significant event was the first ever political strike of the working class (Bombay) to protest against the arrest of Tilak A new kind of situation was developing in the country's freedom movement New sections of people were being drawn into the struggle

To defeat the vicious strategy of "divide and rule" was a paramount necessity The Congress-Muslim League Pact of 1916 was an important step in this direction Both were to work together to put pressure on the British to concede constitutional reforms The next such step was when Gandhiji recognised the Khilafat movement launched in 1920-21 by the Ali Brothers (Maulana Mohammad Ali and Shaukat Ali) as an anti-imperialist movement Gandhiji's civil disobedience movement (1919-22) and the Khilafat movement joined hands This cemented the unity of Hindus and Muslims in the struggle against the foreign rule

Gandhi-led Civil Disobedience Movements New Sweep of the Freedom Struggle

AFTER the end of the First World War (1914-18) we entered an entirely new phase in our freedom struggle In this phase Gandhiji emerged as the foremost leader The first civil disobedience movement, also called non-cooperation movement (1919-22), was launched to protest against the Jallianwala Bagh (Amritsar) massacre Gandhi took the movement to the rural areas also and in that sense the movement became really mass-based Both the urban and rural areas were swept into it Many students and teachers left their educational institutions, lawyers gave up their professional careers to join the movement This is also a period of great Hindu-Muslim unity

The second civil disobedience movement (1930-34) drew the masses further into its fold

Later, in 1940 Gandhiji launched a satyagraha movement when the Second World War (1939-45) broke out and the British dragged our country into it, against our wishes

The *"Quit India"* movement of 1942 was a glorious event in this chain of struggles The post-Second World War mass upsurge was the last nail in the coffin of British rule Even the armed forces and the police that the colonialists had recruited to suppress the people and popular movements raised the banner of revolt, as for example, the INA trials, RIN mutiny in Bombay, police revolts in Delhi and some other places, etc

This phase of the struggle (1919-47) produced a galaxy of national leaders apart from Gandhi, like Motilal Nehru, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Bose, Sardar Patel, Maulana Azad, C R Das, Dr M A Ansari, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Dr Rajendra Prasad, Dr Kitchlew, etc I am not mentioning the Left leaders here That will be done separately, further in this write-up

Perhaps no other freedom struggle, in any Third World country, was as powerful and massive as ours

1917 Russian Revolution's Impact on our Freedom Struggle

THE Russian Socialist Revolution of 1917, led by the Bolshevik Party headed by Lenin, gave human history an entirely new turn—a revolution which placed on its agenda the building of a society in which exploitation of man by man would be ended Progressive humanity the world over hailed it It gave a new impetus to national liberation movements, including our own Gandhi, Tilak, Nehru, Subhas Bose and the great poets Rabindranath Tagore and Iqbal among many others welcomed it The Russian Revolution and the Indian freedom struggle became great friends Undoubtedly, this Revolution has had a profound impact on the whole course of developments in the present century The disintegration of the Soviet Union cannot negate this historical fact Why the disintegration took place is another matter to be dealt with somewhere else

The rise of the broad Left, and of the communist movement, in our own freedom struggle can be traced to the inspiring message of this world-shaking event

However, it needs to be stressed that the communist movement and the broad Left could take advantage of the ideas of the Socialist Revolution because of the favourable conditions obtaining in our own freedom struggle The Left could contribute to its powerful growth because of it

CPI's Notable Contributions

THE CPI was formed in December 1925 at Kanpur, it was declared an illegal party, and had to work underground till 1942, when the ban was lifted

However, Communist groups had begun to be formed from 1920 onward in different parts of the country The Bombay group led by S A Dange was the first such group Obviously, they were all inspired by the revolutionary message of the 1917 Russian event Some young Indians, particularly from Punjab, even left India to go to the Central Asian part of the Soviet Union When they came back, they were arrested and a conspiracy case was launched against them in 1922—the Peshawar Conspiracy Case

The Communist groups worked inside the Congress and simultaneously were engaged in organising workers and peasants as an independent political force The British rulers were scared at this development in the freedom struggle They were determined to crush the rising communist movement They called it a "Bolshevik conspiracy" and launched two Conspiracy Cases, Kanpur (1924) and Meerut (1929) The Meerut Case acquired national importance and continued for nearly four years The Meerut Case was launched in the background of rising militant struggles of the working class In 1928, at the call of Girni Kamgar Union (Red Flag), the textile workers of Bombay were on strike for six months The Meerut Case accused, even though Communist, received powerful support from the national leaders of the Congress, including the two Nehrus

Simultaneously, the British launched the Lahore Conspiracy Case against Bhagat Singh and his colleagues Bhagat Singh and his group were considerably influenced by the ideas of the Russian Socialist Revolution It is no accident that those of Bhagat Singh's colleagues who survived the gallows later joined the Communist Party Ajoy Ghosh, who subsequently became the General Secretary of the CPI, was one of them This was also the period when other militant groups (as for example, the Chittagong Armoury Case prisoners) joined the CPI

The period of the thirties marked a remarkable shift in the national liberation movement in favour of the Left Communists played a significant role in this development The birth of the Congress Socialist Party in 1934, the formation of independent organisations of peasants, students and writers (the All-India Kisan Sabha, with Swami Sahjanand, a Leftist, as its President, Progressive Writers' Association, PWA, with Munshi Prem Chand as its President and Sajjad Zaheer the General Secretary, the All India Students' Federation inaugurated by Jawaharlal Nehru) All these, formed in 1936, signified new changes on the Indian political scene

This was also the time when a demand was raised by all sections of the Left for collective affiliation of class organisations of workers and peasants in Indian National Congress This was supported by Nehru in the 1936 session of the Congress But the Patel group of leadership opposed it, and the proposal was then dropped

Importantly, in 1938 the Left in the Congress (Communists, Socialists, Subhasites and others) succeed, in electing Subhas Bose as the Congress President defeating the candidate sponsored by the dominant Congress leadership (Gandhi, Nehru, Azad, Patel, etc) This was the high water-mark of the powerful influence that the Left had acquired in the national liberation movement

Unfortunately, divisions in the Left, particularly the anti-Communist attitude of some Congress Socialist Party leaders headed by Jaya Prakash Narayan, changed the situation against the Left If this had not happened, the Left would have became the most powerful force in the national-liberation struggle of our country

The Left also produced a galaxy of national leaders during this period, like Dange, E M S Namboodiripad, P C Joshi, Ajoy Ghosh, Sohan Singh Josh, Dr K M Ashraf, Sajjad Zaheer, etc (the CPI section of the Left), and Subhas Bose, Jayaprakash Narain, Rammanohar Lohia, Acharya Narendra Dev among others

Highlighting the Contribution of Communists

BEFORE independence, as well as after independence, there have been persistent attempts to denigrate the glorious role of the CPI in the freedom struggle and the immense sacrifices that it has made in the fight against British imperialism As a matter of fact, the CPI from its very inception has suffered the most under the rule of British imperialists It is because in certain periods our party made some mistakes, which we ourselves have criticised openly and boldly, that our party's enemies and critics take advantage to hurl those mistakes against us and call us all manner of names

In any case the great merit of our party is that it never betrayed the masses, whose interests have always been close to our heart Our party's enemies have "finished" us off several times But every time history has proved them wrong

The CPI's Positive Contributions to the Freedom Struggle are Manifold

1 Communists were the first in the Indian National Congress to raise the demand for complete independence as early as 1921 (Ahmedabad session of the Congress) This demand, also raised in the manifesto in the following year issued for the Gaya session of the Congress, in which Communists also called for abolition of landlordism and demanded adult suffrage, democracy, nationalisation of public utility services, transport, mines and state control of big industries and workers' committes in state sector Communists also raised the demand for a Constituent Assembly to frame India's Constitution

Communists persisted in the demand for complete independence, inside and outside the Congress, till it was accepted in 1927 at the Madras session (presided over by Dr M A Ansari) of the Congress and finally at the Lahore session in 1929 (presided over by Jawaharlal Nehru) This marked a turning point in the history of the Congress and a great victory of the left wing in the Congress in which the young Communist Party was playing a notable role The national liberation struggle entered a new militant phase

It is significant that on the eve of the Lahore session of the Congress, Gandhiji visited the Meerut jail to meet the Meerut Conspiracy Case prisoners (mostly Communists) and to tell them that the Congress had decided for complete independence as its goal

"Now you should have no complaint against me," Gandhiji had remarked, and asked for the support of the Meerut prisoners He of course readily got it, because these prisoners had been demanding precisely such a thing for years

This confirms that even Gandhiji recognised our party's contribution in bringing forcefully to the fore the question of complete independence as the goal of the Congress

2 Our party did pioneering work in bringing the ideas of socialism to our country and in popularising it among the masses Communists had to undergo terrible sufferings and face severe repression for this But they bore it cheerfully and heroically Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Bose and the Bhagat Singh group of militants also popularised the achievements of the Soviet Union in building a socialist society Jawaharlal even visited the Soviet Union in 1927, alongwith his father Motilal Nehru

3 Communists gave a new turn to the Indian working class movement, rescued it from reformism and turned it to the revolutionary path The process began in the twenties along with the birth and growth of the communist movement

The orientation that the CPI gave to the working class and peasant struggles imparted a new content to the national liberation struggle The class demands of workers and peasants began to be integrated with the fight for national freedom Of course, this was not without conflicts But inside the national liberation struggle a strong trend grew which saw the new political reality—workers and peasants asserting themselves as an independent political force—and wanted it to be recognised

4 Communists made an effective contribution in building a Leftwing in the Congress Communists occupied leading positions in the Congress Socialist Party formed in 1934 They helped in orienting the Left to a scientific ideology and in putting forward the idea of communist-socialist unity inside the Congress Several sections of Socialists subsequently joined the CPI in Kerala, Andhra and in other provinces

5 Communists popularised the concept of internationalism, the concept that our national struggle is part of the worldwide struggle against imperalism Gradually, a section of the Congress leadership and later the Congress as a whole, began to recognise the fact that our struggle against British imperialism has to be linked up with similar struggles

in other parts of the world

By the thirties it had become a practice for the Congress, in its Working Committee as well as in the AICC and annual sessions, to adopt resolutions on the international situation—condemning imperialism and expressing solidarity with freedom struggles (eg Palestine, Abyssinia, China, Spain, etc) It condemned Hitler fascism and the Munich Pact which was surrender of British and French imperialists before Hitler

6 Communists popularised the achievements of the Soviet Union in building socialism and the idea of planned economic development It is not without significance that by 1938 the Congress had already set up a Planning Committee, with Prof K T Shah as its Chairman, to work under Jawaharlal Nehru

7 A most important contribution of Communists to the freedom struggle is the armed mass struggle against princely autocracy Telengana against Nizam and Punnapra-Vayalar against the Maharaja of Travancore are its outstanding examples These were not merely peasant struggles, they had democratic goals, too The peasants led by the Communist Party conducted armed guerilla struggles on the basis of mass support Thus they are distinctly different from individual armed actions In these two struggles (Telengana and Punnapra-Vayalar) nearly 3000 Communists laid down their lives

While Gandhiji gave one form of struggle, the communists gave some others, more revolutionary Communists do not counter-pose one against the other, because both played an important role in mobilising the masses for the overthrow of imperialism

The armed struggles against the princely autocracy had another aspect also Conspiracies of British imperialism to encourage the princely autocrats to declare their terrorities "independent", when India became free, were frustrated The socalled "independence" of princely states was in fact a manoeuvre of imperialism to use them as bases for imperialist intrigues against free India

The post-Second World War mass upsurge was the high water-mark in our long struggle against the foreign rule The British rulers saw the writing on the wall and resorted to negotiations with the leaderships of the Congress and the Muslim League The leaderships of these two parties did not want mass strikes, demonstrations and other such actions in that period

It needs to be noted that in the post-war mass upsurge the Communists were the most active and leading force, while the Congress and League leaders pursued a compromising course If it were otherwise and if these leaders were themselves heading the mass upsurge, may be the unfortunate partition of the country along communal lines could have been avoided

CPI's Mistake in Regard to "Quit India" Movement

THE CPI in subsequent years accepted its serious mistake in regard to the *"Quit India"* Movement of 1942, which the Communists did not support, even though a large number of them were arrested and jailed

What was our mistake? There was no difference of opinion in the ranks of the freedom movement insofar as the first phase of the Second World War was concerned Before Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union, the war between the two groups of imperialist powers was an imperialist war After the attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941 the character of the war changed qualitatively The CPI called the war against the fascist powers as "people's war" This was in January 1942

But, even before the Communists characterised it as people's war, Jawaharlal Nehru and Maulana Azad (the then Congress president), after their release in November 1941, made statements expressing their sympathy and support for the Soviet Union, China, etc in the war against Hitler The AICC in January 1942 passed a resolution along these lines However, it demanded a national government to prosecute the war

The CPI fully supported the demand for a national government and stressed the need for a Congress-Muslim League unity to force the British Government to concede it

The British imperialists were adamant Hence the *"Quit India"* resolutions of the Bombay AICC on August 8, 1942 The British provoked the nation by arresting the Congress leaders and launching terrible repression Gandhiji in a latter to the Viceroy from prison wrote that they had planned no movement The masses were provoked by what Gandhiji termed *"leonine repression"* of the imperialists

While it was correct for the CPI to express support for the Soviet Union, China and for the anti-fascist war, it failed to realise the angry anti-British mood of the people That isolated us in the national liberation movement We had to pay a heavy for it If we had not committed this mistake, the process of Left orientation of the national liberation movement could have been accelerated in a big way ■

Re-interpreting 'Gandhian Economics' and the Gandhi-Nehru Debate

H Y SHARADA PRASAD

Mahatma Gandhi The New Economic Agenda by PC Joshi, Har-Anand Publishers, New Delhi, 1996, pp 250, Rs 295

Nirad Chaudhuri, some might remember, pokes fun at Dr Radhakrishnan for writing a whole book on the philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore Tagore, according to him, was a poet, a great poet, the greatest poet our country has produced Kalidasa not excluded, but not a philosopher Nirad Chaudhuri wants his categories clear Not for him the confusion implicit in the Sanskrit saying "One who is not a seer cannot create poetry"

I wonder what the likes of Nirad Chaudhuri would say about according the title of economist to Mahatma Gandhi When a young scholar of Delhi University proposed to write a research paper on Gandhi's economic thought some years ago, a senior professor is said to have pooh-poohed the idea, remarking that it was a futile exercise to try to establish that Gandhi was an economic thinker Gandhi himself would have disclaimed the label The only expertise he claimed was in the theory and practice of non-violence But about his teaching at large he used to say that he had put forth no new precepts but only restated truths which were as old as the hills As for economics, he once confessed he had not read Adam Smith, Mill or Marshall No academic "ist" of any standing would resist the temptation of saying that he had stated something new

Gandhi is not, to the best of my knowledge, included in any standard textbook of economics that are recommended for students in various parts of the world the way Adam Smith and Karl Marx, J M Keynes and Thorstein Veblen, Max Weber and R H Tawney are It is only in India that, as a gesture to nationalist sentiment, Gandhian thought is taught, but it is done generally in Departments of History rather than in Departments of Economics

But few pondered as deeply as Gandhi did about poverty and how to remove it If economics is a study of the wealth of nations, it is also a study of the poverty of peoples To Gandhi poverty meant moral poverty no less than material want *Dharma* and *artha* were in his views related If he preached the limitation of wants and voluntary poverty, he equally forcefully pointed out how difficult it was to lead a spiritual life in grinding poverty He was never tired of saying that what was economically wrong could not be politically right His observation that God appears to the poor in the form of bread is a fine one-line summary of his economic and religious beliefs

Far from being a maverick or marginal amateur in matters economic, Gandhi was obsessed with everything that a major, mainstream economist concerns himself with—production, distribution, employment, utilisation of surplus labour and creation of capital, removal of intersectoral imbalances, whether between agriculture and industry or between village and town, in fact the entire range of the social repercussions of economic policies Above all these, he had unparalleled insights into the economic consequences of colonialism

It is not as if Gandhi's economic ideas, unconventional and unscholarly as they are, have not attracted professional social scientists Among those who have written at length on him are J J Anjaria, B N Ganguli, D P Mukherji, M L Dantwala, Amiya K Dasgupta, N K Bose and Bhabatosh Dutta from an earlier generation and Raj Krishna, Ashok Rudra, C T Kurien, Sukhamoy Chakravarti, Ajit Dasgupta and J D Sethi from the younger Gunnar Myrdal has also discussed Gandhi's economic ideas in his works Now comes a new book, *Mahatma Gandhi The New Economic Agenda* by Professor P C Joshi which serves as a clear and comprehensive introduction to Gandhi's economic thought

It has been said that each man's understanding of Mahatma Gandhi is a measure of his own evolution Professor Joshi has come to Gandhi after labouring long years in the Marxian collective farm He confesses

> Rejecting and reviving my own earlier prejudices and preoccupations, I was set on the path of rediscovering in Gandhi, a searcher of rare originality and depth of understanding who had a holistic vision and rich insights into the human condition and its economic dimensions and determinants

He was excited to find in him a social thinker who questioned the concept of a universal model of social and economic development, valid for all countries and all times

◆

THE phrase "Gandhian economics" naturally evokes the Mahatma's strong aversion to modern science and technology and his deification of the Charkha Not many have actually read his early tract *Hind Swaraj* but many know of it as an uncompromising critique of industrialisation, written under the influence of Thoreau and Ruskin Joshi has been able to show that Gandhi's intellectual belief system did not stay stuck at *Hind Swaraj* but changed and evolved in response to new experiences If the earlier Gandhi had castigated all industrialisation as evil, what the later Gandhi opposed was not technology itself, but the infatuation with it which had led to the pauperisation of peoples and added to the ranks of the unemployed Gandhi stood for production by the masses, production which converted their labour into useful goods and did not undermine their self-respect At the same time he also stood for distribution which lifted them from abject pauperism Joshi furnishes a series of observations of Gandhi which show he had an open mind on technology

> As a moderately intelligent man, I know that man cannot live without industry Therefore I cannot oppose industrialisation Dead machinery must not be pitched against the millions of living machines represented by the villagers scattered in the 700,000 villages of India Machinery to be well used has to help and ease human effort The present use of machinery tends to concentrate wealth in the hands of a few, in total disregard of millions of men and women whose bread is snatched by it out of their mouth
>
> I would favour the use of the most elaborate machinery if thereby India's pauperisation and resulting idleness can be abolished I do visualise electricity, ship-building, iron works, machine-making and the like, existing side by side with village crafts
>
> Who said that (I oppose electricity)? If we could have electricity in every home, I should not mind villagers plying their implements and tools with the help of electricity But then the village communities and the state would own power-houses, I would prize every invention of science made for the benefit of all The heavy machinery for works of public utility which cannot be undertaken by human labour, has its inevitable place but I have no consideration for machinery which is meant either to enrich the few at the cost of the many or, without cause, to displace the useful labour of the many

In short, the test was the good of *Daridranarayan* Although not a villager by background, Gandhi identified himself with the villagers of India "Through my life and work I have become the vessel of the longings of India's vast millions," he wrote That is why "whatever cannot be shared with the masses is taboo to me"

Gandhi also said

> I represent the most exploited nation on the earth

He had an unerring feel for the link between political and economic exploitation He often remarked

> The industrialisation of one tiny island kingdom is keeping the world in chains

To quote Joshi's words, Gandhi

> clearly perceived the specifics of the colonial mode of exploitation through intuition, observation and direct experience, what Marx had grasped through years of hard study and reflection in the British Museum library

He goes on to add

> Where even Marx went wrong in his assessment of the introduction of railways as the forerunner of modern industrialisation in India Gandhi showed an unsurpassed sensitiveness to the fate of the common man and an unerring perception of the logic of the colonial political economy

That is indeed a bold admission for a Marxist to make

The Gandhian formulation of enough for everyone's need but not for everyone's greed is widely known and acclaimed Discussing this at some length, Joshi remarks

> Gandhi was one of the few to show how within a moral or value universe alone a viable economic order was possible whether at the local, national or global levels It is Gandhi's worldview alone which linked up the question of violence and of ecological degradation with freeplay to humanity's predatory, acquisitive and exploitative passions and interests

Another question that the expression "Gandhian economics" provokes is the supposed antagonism between Gandhi's and Nehru's ideas and the repudiation of the master by the disciple in what he did during his years of power, particularly through the Five-Year Plans As expected, Joshi springs to Nehru's defence With painstaking documentation he points out, that just as the Gandhi who led the freedom movement in India was different from the young *satyagrahi* who wrote *Hind Swaraj* in South Africa, the Jawaharlal Nehru who as the Prime Minister and planner wrote "The Basic Approach" paper and the introduction to the Third Plan was different from the Nehru who quarrelled and argued with Gandhi in *The Autobiography* and in Sevagram

He dismisses the attacks of Charan Singh and J D Sethi and maintains that Nehru, on the contrary, became the best interpreter of his master and the best exposition of his economic, social and political thought He explains how the Nehru-Mahalanobis model of development strove consciously to reconcile big industry and small-scale industry and was in fact "heavy industry yoked to cottage industry"—our version of "walking on two legs" He quotes Mahalanobis' statement that with the new electronics technology, it was possible for smaller machines to be effectively used in many fields

One also wishes that Joshi had brought out how it was the Gandhian insights that had prevented the rulers and planners of independent India from embarking upon any socialisation of agriculture as the Soviet bloc and China had done with consequences so violent and disastrous It is the price those countries paid for subscribing to the Marxian dogma that the small producer is a relic of the past and Lenin's contempt for "rural idiocy"

◆

JOSHI sums up the Gandhi-Nehru debate in the following words

> Neither Gandhi nor Nehru was a slave to any doctrine, both of them were wishing to revise their ideas in the light of new knowledge and new perceptions The force of economic realism brought them closer to each other in their approach to the Indian economic problems and their solutions

Joshi has a quarrel with self-styled Gandhites He finds them too doctrinaire "Gandhians of all varieties, who have turned Gandhism itself into a dogmatic creed," he remarks, "have created formidable barriers between Gandhi and the thoughtful elements of the younger generation" Echoing a professional colleague, he finds fault with neo-Gandhians for failing to develop an adequate theory of investment planning Long years ago, D G Tendulkar had told me that the reason why Gandhi had permitted him to write his biography was that he knew that he was not a Gandhian and could therefore trust him Ever since I have felt that Gandhi himself was not a Gandhian I thank god for it He did not subscribe to the superstition, as he once put it, that everything was good because it was ancient or was Indian

I am acquainted with a few Gandhians Alas, the older ranks have greatly thinned owing to the passage of years Many of them were likeable eccentrics But their successors, who rarely had met Gandhi, are rather off-putting The trouble with them is that they spend too much of their time in the air, hopping from one international seminar to another They bring to mind Swift's characters who were busy extracting sunlight from cucumbers They would do well to spend more time on the Indian earth At the same time, there is a great need and opportunity for the truly cerebral Gandhians to work out strategies for the adoption of decentralised modern industry in the countryside, utilising the insights of electronics—something that Gandhi would have approved

Professor Joshi's book, illuminating as it is, has a weakness It is a collection of five long papers written by him at different periods along with his university lecture notes These are printed in individual chapters Naturally, some ideas and quotations get repeated and some ideas do not get developed—which would not have happened if the book had been planned and written as an organic whole

To cite one example, we are not sure whether Joshi approves or disapproves of Sukhamoy Chakravarti, whom he describes as the foremost economist in the establishment In one chapter he gives him credit for his understanding of Gandhi, in another he criticises him for not acknowledging his debt to Gandhian thought Joshi does not also spell out exactly what his ideas are on a Gandhian agenda for the future, belying an expectation roused by the title of the book

Gandhian political thought will continue to be studied, here and elsewhere, if only because it provides insights into and techniques of how power can be resisted and the weak can stand up to the strong As for his economic thought, with its unerring understanding of colonialism, it can perhaps teach us in India a thing or two on how we can survive the tidal wave of globalisation After all, classical colonialism, in which empire followed trade, was the first wave of globalisation and Gandhi, the arch anti-colonialist, showed how to deal with it ■

(Courtesy *The Asian Age*)

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COMMUNICATION

Queen's Visit and Apology

Sometime back one of us (Jagmohan Singh) had raised the demand for an apology by the British Queen (at the time of her planned visit to Amritsar in October this year) for the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and the cruelty towards martyrs Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev. The intense debate on this issue since then has motivated us to further clarify our position.

These two tragic and entirely avoidable episodes of British rule in India are widely remembered and constitute the emotive symbols of a wide range of extreme injustices perpetuated by the British rulers. Ruinous policies were inflicted on Indian farmers and artisans destroying the base of the Indian economy, a process worsened by plundering billions of rupees from here. As a result famines became more destructive and frequent than at any other time in history. According to conservative estimates, nearly 40 million people perished in these famines—at an average of over two hundred thousand deaths per year—during the nearly two centuries of British rule. The callous attitude of the British Government towards this gigantic human tragedy is well known, particularly in the case of the Great Bengal Famine of 1943 which claimed four million lives.

◆

THE poverty and deprivation to which the Indian people were exposed during British rule is also evident from the fact that the expectancy of life at the time of India's freedom was only about 31 years.

This is what some British scholars and officials had to say about British rule in India:

> *Robert Clive*—"Such a scene of anarchy, confusion, bribery, corruption and extortion was never seen or heard of in any country but Bengal."
>
> *John Sullivan*—"Our system acts very much like a sponge, drawing up all the good things from the bank of the Ganges, and squeezing them down on the bank of the Thames."
>
> *H H Wilson*—"The foreign manufacturer employed the arm of political injustice to keep down and ultimately strangle the (Indian) competitor."
>
> *William Bentinck*—"The bones of cotton weavers are bleaching the plains of India."

At the time of the 1857-59 revolt, after the victory of the British had been already achieved, nearly 50,000 people were hanged in the most cruel manner on roadside trees. Later in peaceful protests, satyagrahas, and gurudwara liberation movement thousands of entirely peaceful protesters were killed while a much larger number suffered serious injuries and disabilities. In the 'Quit India' Movement of 1942 over 10,000 people died in police and military firings.

◆

THE unnatural and unjustified relations of British rulers, following their famous policy of "Divide and Rule", caused heavy damage to composite Indian culture. British rulers actively promoted several types of divisions among the Indian people which contributed in a large measure to the partition of India and the accompanying violence. As Jawaharlal Nehru wrote in 1946:

> It is our fault, of course, and we must suffer for our failings. But I cannot excuse or forgive the British authorities for the deliberate part they have played in creating disruption in India. All other injuries will pass, but this will continue to plague us for a much longer period.

The roots of many problems faced by South Asia today can be traced to colonial rule. What is more, neo-colonialism is also a reality of the present world. According to the United Nations data, international inequalities have been increasing further in recent years. Developing countries like India continue to face a lot of injustices at the hands of the industrial countries which include the former colonial powers.

In this context an apology by a former colonial power is not just the expression of regret for historical injustices, it is in addition also the expression of a desire to at least partly undo the injustices by establishing a genuinely equal and just relationship. Hence our demand for apology arises not from any ill-feeling but from a deeply-felt commitment for establishing a just and egalitarian world in a peaceful way.

We are sure that with such a deep commitment to the future of humanity, a sincere intellectual introspection will start here as well as in Britain.

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Hitting the Headlines with Diana's Demise

G S BHARGAVA

Princess Diana's tragic death has rightly hit the headlines I have yet to come across an English newspaper in the country, from Guwahati to Jammu, which did not feature the report of her death as the 'lead' story, nearly 24 hours after the television networks had broken the news and stayed with it for hours on end Normally in a developing story of that kind the newspapers focus on later aspects on the ground that the hard news has dated In this case, it has not

Let me illustrate On that fateful Sunday evening, a friend who had not heard of the tragedy until then was frantically scanning the major TV channels like the BBC, CNN and NBC, for details of the fatal car crash in Paris Put off by the avalanche of sound bytes about Diana, her life and loves, he turned off the television, saying he would read it 'in tomorrow's newspaper' He was impatient to wait for the repetition of the kernel of the story by the networks

If one may hazard a hunch, the reason for the death remaining central to the story even after a lapse of time is the celebrity nature of the victim and the suddenness and other circumstances of the occurrence But the Associated Press/PTI report carried by most of our newspapers mentioned in the 'intro' itself that she died 'in a car crash after being pursued at high speed by paparazzi on motorcycles'

The dictionary meaning of the Italian-origin word, *paparazzo* (singular of *paparazzi*), is explicit enough It means 'a freelance photographer who pursues celebrities to get photographs of them' *The Times of India* had an informative report stressing that the paparazzi are not 'to be confused with photographers working for mainstream newspapers and magazines, who normally operate under a strict ethical code imposed by their professional organisations'

What it did not say, however, was that some newspapers and magazines also patronise the paparazzi at times The example was the display in colour of 'candid' pictures of Diana and her companion in death, Dodi Al-Fayed, by *The Asian Age/Deccan Chronicle* combine on the front page a few days before her death They are the handiwork of paparazzi (Zee Television also showed the 'Di-Do' pictures, by the way) Nevertheless, *The Asian Age* headlines screamed "Vultures chase Diana to Death", while *The Deccan Chronicle* gave a veritable black-border treatment to the story

◆

THE case for the paparazzi was put forth by Jean-Francois Leroy, Director of the Perpignan Festival of Journalism, according to the *International Herald Tribune* "Those who denounce the paparazzi today will be the first to buy the photos of the young princes crying at Lady Di's funeral," he said "The paparazzi respond to the photo agencies, which respond to the newspapers and magazines which respond to the public," he added It is a facile enough alibi How has the so-called public clamour for such journalism been created? If newspapers and magazines had as a rule decided not to promote the paparazzi culture in journalism would the profession have suffered? Or, would the readers have been let down?

To cite another instance, two days before the fatal car crash, the *Andhra Pradesh Times* had an AFP story saying that

> Princess Diana again adorned the front pages of the British tabloids this time as she raised her leg over Dodi's shoulders to clamber aboard his jet-ski The *Sun* carried a series of photos showing how Diana, got herself into the perilous position

Her death and the alleged contribution of the paparazzi to it have, no doubt, made a difference The widespread public perception pointed an accusing finger at the press generally, even if the paparazzi were singled out The British *News of the World* and its American look-alike, the *National Enquirer* turned down offers of a French photographer of pictures of dying Diana trapped inside the wrecked Mercedes in the Parisian tunnel But a German daily, *Bild Zeitung*, had no such compunction Its editor defended his action saying that

> the members of the royal household have less of a private life than normal mortals They lead a public life and enjoy a higher regard The camera cannot censure that

Even he admitted, however, that the 'limits are clearly overstepped. when reporting turns into a state of siege' The moot point is whether his newspaper while accepting the photos tried to find out how they were made Then 'the limits' would have been evident

The debate on journalists' duty and the privacy of individuals, including celebrities, cannot be clinched on this note What is of relevance here is whether the paparazzi culture, in its Indian orientation, will spread in the country or whether we are immune from it because as *The Times of India* said,

> trigger-happy security-men are known to pound and pulverise anyone who strays into the path of a VIP cavalcade

Not a commendable constraint, if it were one The short point is whether competitive journalism should end up as jungle law in the name of pandering to public demand I am afraid there have been tendencies in the reporting generally of quite a few of our newspapers, which are qualitatively akin to the paparazzi culture of earning 'more from a single snapshot of Diana's thigh than what most reporters would make from a whole year's work'

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Interestingly, meanwhile, according to the Deccan Herald, Diana's death figured in the Karnataka Legislative Council discussion on 'a derogatory article' on women legislators in a Bangalore weekly *Lankesh Patrike* Flaying the publication for it, a Congress member, Nafeez Fazal, has been reported as saying

> Probably Diana would have been alive today had it been for the press (which) were invading her privacy

Of course, there was not even a suggestion of invasion of privacy in the 'scurrilous article' in the weekly. According to what has been said by aggrieved women members of the Legislative Assembly when it considered the matter earlier and made it a privilege issue, 'it cast aspersions on the person and style of functioning' of women members of both Houses of the State Legislature The Union Minister of State, Rathnamala Savanur, was not spared either The offending article is said to have called some 'loud mouths' while charging others with undue reticence Provocation apparently is its purpose

◆

FINALLY, it is a pity that the 'crisis' in Hyderabad caused by some Majlis activists said to be protesting against 'irreverent references' to the Prophet in a moral science textbook in use for about a decade has been largely overlooked by the newspapers outside Andhra Pradesh By no stretch of imagination can it be called a local problem In fact, it has dangerous implications nationwide More so, because the high-profile Chief Minister, Chandrababu Naidu, with his reputation for facing issues squarely seems to have opted for an escapist way out of it The 'crisis' in a nutshell is that busybodies of the Majlis suddenly discovered dishonour of the Holy Prophet in a textbook in force for many years and led a mob in a jeep to a Christian shrine in the city, where they desecrated a statue of Jesus Christ, beat up the venerable Father Dominic Savio and a woman teacher and vandalised an established school Only four of the one hundred odd thugs were arrested, while the government 'withdrew' the textbook, on its own, without consulting impartial academic opinion of all communities, with a view to appeasing the 'cynical exploiters of religion for the furtherance of their own ends', as a correspondent, Hashim N Tyabji, said in a letter to the *Andhra Pradesh Times* More interestingly, many Muslims of the city have openly protested against the Majlis' action in projecting Islam as a religion of intolerance ■

TERESA AND DIANA

Two Different Worlds

AVIJIT PATHAK

Death is tragic, but not meaningless Because death reminds us of the facticity of existence From death it is possible to learn some of the important essons of life Death is, therefore, a new beginning—a moment of learning For example, with the death of Princess Diana and Mother Teresa we begin to experience the nature of contemporary social reality—its contradictions and pathologies, its promises and possibilities

Princess Diana's death showed us the tragedy of being a celebrity in a media-induced world where celebrities get reduced to images for cultural consumption Long before her physical death, the perpetual gaze of the culture-industry had denied her autonomy and killed her spiritually We also learn the West's obsession with sex Diana's sexual life becomes a master narrative, everyone seeks to consume it We learn also the depthlessness of the European civilisation It seems to have lost its agenda, its only preoccupation, it appears, is with mindless excitement and intoxication

◆

But then, that is not the only world There is another world—a spiritually regenerated world that Mother Teresa wanted us to see and appreciate The Mother died, yet there are many lessons we can learn from the life she led

First, we learn the meaning of religiosity This is important because for many of us, as Nietzsche said, God is dead, religion has lost its healing power We have also seen how religion classifies and hierarchies human beings, causing hatred and violence Yet, how do we negate Mother Teresa? No secular historian can refute her existence Because she was not merely a mythical name in religious texts She was, to use the Baconian language, empirically demons-trable And she demonstrated that the power of authentic religiosity was love

Second, Mother Teresa told us about the meaning of practice—how to evolve a space for oneself and enter the world of action In modern times, because of the gigantic growth of bureaucratic organisations and institutions, we find ourselves powerless and alienated Mother Teresa taught us that it was possible to act and intervene

Third, from her life we also learn the meaning of cross-cultural communication Her Christianity was no barrier to win the hearts of millions of Hindus Where else do you find the ideal *karmayogin* as depicted in *Bhagavadgita*? Her religiosity transcended the barriers of cultures and nations In a way, the Mother, not the Michael Jacksons of the world, was a real symbol of globalisation

Fourth, in the epic story of her life we also see the assertion of femininity From Simone de Beauvior to Julia Kristeva—we live amidst feminists But Mother Teresa's feminism was of a different kind—beyond the comprehension of the high academic culture of feminism Because she was not competing with men, she was not trying to teach them a lesson She was simply realising what she was gifted with—the infinite power of life-affirming maternity She made the masculine apparatus feel guilty Because her language was not the language of separation, narcissism and competition, it was the language of transcendence of all dualities

◆

Yes, Diana and the Mother lived in two different worlds. Diana's world was filled with glamour, affluence and media images It was about spiritual poverty amidst material affluence And the Mother's world was a world of the sick and the wretched of the earth Yet, it was full of light, bliss and happiness It was no wonder Diana was becoming closer to the Mother Perhaps the Princess was realising the poverty of her affluence

In the age of economic liberalisation we are often told that the affluent West is the ideal we can strive for Diana's death reveals the spiritual crisis the affluent West is confronted with And Mother Teresa's life is a revolt against this de-spiritualised existence ■

(Courtesy *The Pioneer*)

The author is an Assistant Professor, Centre for the Study of Social Systems, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

If Hopes were Dupes...

DEEPAK PAL

He was inside a cave Hiding—after having suffered a defeat There he saw a spider trying to climb up the thread and then slipping down The spider unsuccessfully tried again and again After a few more efforts it came out successful in climbing up the thread It was sheer perseverance that made the spider attain its goal

He was enthused and reassured himself that he too would make it The watchword being "try, try, try again" Try he did and was successful Robert Bruce his name Same is true of Indian cricket and its steward Sachin Tendulkar In the recently concluded Asia Cup in Sri Lanka, Sachin and his entourage did their level best to come out victorious, but could never make it Did they deserve to win? Perhaps, yes, perhaps, not! That is the lean and uncertain patch the Indian cricket is passing through now in the game of glorious uncertainty

◆

WHAT ails the present-day Indian cricket?

The diagnosis is not that easy If pathological tests are carried out, the results will go to show that not one, but Indian cricket suffers from a number of complicated diseases What is needed is to identify them one by one and prophylactic measures are undertaken to effect a possible cure and then to help it regain its normal health But it is easier said than done It is in every department of the game that a real professional approach is needed—batting, bowling, fielding and, last but not the least, the selection of a team that will give its best as a team which, I am afraid, Indian cricket is lacking at the moment Yes, you have said it—the team spirit!

It is this spirit behind the team that lifted Indian cricket to its pinnacle of glory—a force not only to reckon with, but also to be respected and adored by one and all Others feared to tread the path the once World Champions treaded

Oh, the good old days!

The cricketing world used to stare in amazement at the enviable batting line-up that Indian cricket could boast of for years together An order down to No 10 was capable of willowing to turn the tide in its favour, braving the onslaughts like the Rock of Gibraltar It almost proved to be a difficult tas for any opponent to make a dent and effect possible defeat The ever victorious team membe were the cynosure of the eye of every cricket lov in India—man and woman, young and old alik

Whither the glittering batting line-up?

◆

GRADUALLY the spirit evaporated, and what we a left with is only a team That too, not a permane one Some of its members are "in" and "out" c it for reasons best known to the conglomerate of select few comprising the selection committee would not go that far as to venture that the prim task of the selection committee is to select a tea which should be the best one (but is normally not and is to the liking of the captain After all, it i the captain who has to marshall his resources t bring about a victory in a match One has but t appreciate Sachin's contention that in selecting team, the captain must have his say And why not After all, zonal-based quota system is not the mai thing—the need of the hour is a team that will no suffer from individualism, bad blood betwee players, poor batting and poor fielding—and wil once again put India on the cricket map of th world

◆

Now for the present one-day team In selecting th team for the Sahara Cup five-match series in Toront starting from September 13 and then for a three-match Golden Jubilee Independence series agains Pakistan on its soil, the selection committee has once again reposed its faith on Sachin Tendulkar, notwithstanding the fact that he has a series of defeats under his belt the one-day series in the West Indies, the triangular contest in South Africa, failing to qualify for Indepedence Cup, losing to Sri Lanka in Asia Cup, and then later, conceding all the three one-day international matches to the same "cricket lions" Sri Lanka—not to talk of the two-test series In the 14-member squad Harvinder Singh, the Punjab medium pacer, the dashing Maharashtra all-under Hrishikesh Kanitkar, and Saba Karim find place at the expense of Venkatesh Prasad, Anil umble and Nayan Mongia Ajay Jadeja has been omoted as the deputy to Sachin

Here, once again, it is the captain who should ow much better than anyone else the strength and eakness of his team And, who else but Sachin mself should know that more often than not the tire Indian team (barring of course on certain casions), revolves around him—be it a test match a one-dayer? Isn't it true that the moment he is ack to the pavilion willowing an injudicious or an ggressive shot, the innings starts wilting under ressure and nervousness? Rahul Dravid's grit and e experienced Azhar's wristy thrusts are hardly apable of stemming the middle-order rot To be an ggressive is no crime, but to execute an indiscreet ot losing patience after being bogged down egotiating accurate bowling and judicious impene-able field placements is certainly inexcusable ore so, when one would like to see a batsman pply himself with a sure and steady straight willow" and play each "leather" according to its erit Sachin Tendulkar is no exception The same true of Saurav Ganguly, and also of others harging down the pitch to hit the "leatherman" ut of the ground and then looking back to see the ff of the middle stick cart-wheeling to one's utter ismay is a thing a "willowman" of world stature ould stay away from Keeping the three sticks tact is an art—the world has seen them doing it, ey—Viv Richards, Sunil Gavaskar, Geoff Boycott, rian Lara, Saeed Anwar, Sanath Jayasuriya and rvinda de Silva—to name but a few

I think it will be in the fitness of things if Sachin bstains from opening the innings and instead sends Ajay Jadeja together with Saurav Let Dravid be t No 3, Azhar following him Let Sachin himself ome as a three drop (as he does in test matches) ith Vinod Kambli, Robin Singh or Hrishikesh anitkar, Saba Karim, Abey Kuruvilla, Rajesh houhan or Nilesh Kulkarni and Debashish Mohanty r Harvinder Singh coming out on the crease in that rder

That the Indian bowling attack boils down to its owest ebb without the strike bowler Srinath, is ommon knowledge In his absence, and now that enkatesh Prasad has been rested, Sachin has to fall ack upon either Debashish Mohanty or Harvinder ingh and Abey Kuruvilla Rajesh Chouhan or ilesh Kulkarni as spinner should serve the purpose think Robin Singh should be given a fair chance with the "leather" And then, Sachin himself is there Doesn't he remember how Azhar used to handle him as a bowler? One wonders why Saurav is not pressed into regular service! Even Ajay Jadeja's talent not being fully exploited is a big question-mark And now, the all-rounder Hrishikesh Kanitkar is also there to make use of

◆

AT the present state of Indian cricket it has become imperative that Sachin should have a good batting line-up to pile up a formidable total in a 50-over game which a rival team finds not only difficult but also impossible to reach A target so set would help the bowlers to perform better and would enthuse the fielders to give their best on the field Isn't it true that a run saved is a run scored? So, what the willow or the leather can't do, let hands do it One should not allow any extra runs to be scored, and should capitalise on the half-chances to apply pressure, hold catches—the difficult ones and not "ground" the easy ones—for "catches win matches" they say, and effect good saves and run-outs

Who can deny that we have resources? What is needed is a full-proof game-plan, objective approach and a correct strategy One wonders how Arjuna Ranatunga (whom John Reid dubbed as "Captain Cool") marshalls his team on the field! See Rameez Raja—who has been entrusted with the task of reconstructing a team constituting a host of new talents—handling his charges creditably!

It is my firm conviction that Sachin also can do it Well, yes, one understands that there is so much responsibility on his young shoulders Yet, that he is capable of discharging his duties faithfully and to the best of his abilities, there's no doubt about it Sachin's task as a mentor should be to guide his boys, show them the way and to boost their morale

Will Sachin pick up the thread and try to place Indian cricket on the high pedestal that it had once acquired and reigned supreme?

An uphill task indeed considering the fact that Indian cricket is passing through a lean patch and lacks confidence!

But then, not everything is lost There is no harm in trying it out He has failed in his endeavour Yes But, then what? After all, failures are the pillars of success, that goes the saying Would he and his entourage be able to turn the game of glorious uncertainty in their favour?

Well, anything is possible If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars ■

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS (AUGUST 31-SEPTEMBER 6, 1997)

NATIONAL

August 31

- Congress President Sitaram Kesri tells a gathering in Ahmedabad "I cannot compromise on the issue corruption" He says he will send two observers to probe the charges against Gujarat Chief Minister Shankersi Vaghela and decide whether to continue supporting his government or not
- CPI General Secretary A B Bardhan says at the end of the three-day meeting of the party's National Coun in New Delhi, that "attempts to cover-up or go slow in exposing or prosecuting the corrupt will be resiste He says the CPI will campaign for passing the Agricultural Workers' Bill, the Lokpal Bill, the Right to Informati Bill and the Women's Reservation Bill and will observe October 2 across the country as anti-corruption a anti-criminalisation day
- An official spokesman says the Prime Minister did not tell the press reporters at Shantiniketan that he wou hold talks with his Pakistani counterpart in New York when he goes there to meet US President Bill Clint and address the UN General Assembly

September 1

- Lok Sabha, in its special golden jubilee session, unanimously adopts a resolution, moved by Speaker P A Sangm Listed as *Agenda for India,* the resolution calls for probity and accountability in public life, ridding the poli of criminalisation, radical electoral reforms, national campaign to check population growth, inculcation of scientific temper for the development of economy as well as human resource, commitment to universal prima education by 2005, with particular emphasis on the girl child, and to make education employment oriente efficient use of resources, attention to infrastructure development, full and freely chosen employment, eliminati of poverty, securing social justice and balanced regional development and the need to practise gender justi as a way of life
- Union Cabinet decides to raise the prices of petrol by Re 1, diesel by Rs 1 80 per litre and LPG by Rs 15 p cylinder
- Prime Minister Gujral tells the Rajya Sabha that he would be happy to meet Pakistan Prime Minister Naw Sharif if an opportunity comes his way in New York

September 2

- CPI-M General Secretary Harkishan Singh Surjeet, at a press conference after the four-day meeting of the party Central Committee meeting, hits out at the Congress for deriding coalitions saying "What does the Congre mean by advocating one-party rule? Since it is clearly not in a position to form a government itself, this w only boost the BJP"
- Prime Minister Gujral, scheduled to visit South Africa on his way back from the UN on October 2 to participa in the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, defers his visit to a later date in view of his preponed visit New York

September 3

- Secretary of the CPI National Council M Farooqui, 77, dies of a heart attack in New Delhi One of the mo popular public figures in the Capital, Farooqi collapses immediately after addressing a seminar on *Coaliti Governance in India* held by the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation and is rushed to hospital where he passes awa
- Lok Shakti President Ramakrishna Hegde, former Chief Minister of Karnataka, says in New Delhi that he wou support a Congress-led government at the Centre with 13 MPs who are willing to join the Lok Shakti
- US Assistant Secretary of State Rick Inderfurth arrives in New Delhi, reportedly to repair the damage do to Indo-US relations by his predecessor Ms Robin Raphel and to initiate a "wide-ranging strategic dialogue

September 4

- Prime Minister Gujral gives instructions to the Home Ministry and the anti-corruption cell in the PMO to procee with the modalities of prosecution of the politicians named in the N N Vohra Committee report He adds f good measures that cases filed against individuals should be supported by comprehensive evidence leaving legal loopholes
- Most of the Unions of Central Government and Allied Services offices serve notice for an indefinite strike fro September 24 to protest against the recommendations of the Fifth Pay Commission and the government's failu to produce a revised pay package
- Congress President Sitaram Kesri appoints Madhavrao Scindia, Tariq Anwar, Ms Meira Kumar, R K Dhaw and Oscar Fernandes as General Secretaries of the AICC Madhavsinh Solanki is made a permanent invit to the CWC and Ahmad Patel retains the post of Treasurer
- Vishwa Hindu Parishad demands that Queen Elizabeth II, when she visits India next month, must apologi for the wrongs committed by the British
- Hindi writer, poet, playwright Dharamveer Bharati, 72, the former editor of the popular weekly *Dharmayug* pass away in Mumbai

September 5

- Bharat Ratna Mother Teresa, laureate of the Nobel Peace Prize for 1979 greatly revered the world over, di of cardiac arrest in the Mother House, Calcutta
- Pakistani troops resort to unprovoked firing a third time in the past fortnight along the Line of Control Nowgam sector of Kupwara district of Jammu and Kashmir Two Indian soldiers are killed and two othe are injured
- BSP President Kanshi Ram invites BJP President L K Advani and senior leader Atal Behari Vajpayee to addre the BSP rally at Lucknow on September 15 Leaders of both the parties are expected to announce their fin decision about the future of their alliance

September 6

- Pakistani troops firing across the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir kill two teenage girls and injure eig other civilians in the Karnah and Keran sectors
- Union Cabinet decides that a state funeral with full military honours will be given to Mother Teresa on Saturda September 13, 1997

INTERNATIONAL

August 31 ➢ Diana, Princess of Wales, dies in Paris when, on being pursued by Paparazzi, her car, a Mercedes S-600, crashes in a tunnel Her wealthy companion Dodi Al-Fayed and the driver die on the spot The Princess dies hours later in the hospital Her security guard is badly injured but survives The President of India, the Prime Minister of India, and Mother Teresa condole the British royal family Messages of condolence pour in from all over the world and shocked crowds throng at the gates of the Kensington Palace where she lived, at the tunnel in Paris where she died, at the gates of the Buckingham Palace and at the St James Palace where her body is kept

➢ Angered at the British Government agreeing to include Sinn Fein in the Northern Ireland peace talks without the IRA surrendering arms, pro-British Ulster Unionists pressure their leader David Trimble to boycott the talks

➢ Iran appoints Ms Aazam Nouri as Deputy Minister of Culture, making her the second woman in the Government of President Mohammad Khatami

➢ Opposition parties in Bangladesh stage massive protest rallies against the recent 61 per cent increase in the prices of petrol and octane

September 1 ➢ Israel eases its month-long closure of the West bank and Gaza Strip in a bid to improve the tense relations with Palestine prior to the visit of US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright As many as 4000 labourers, 2000 traders, 250 teachers and 200 employees of the Palestinian Authority will be allowed to enter Israel

➢ A new land route opens between Nepal and Bangladesh which passing through India links Kathmandu with the shipping port Mongla in Bangladesh

September 2 ➢ Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad says, reports the *New Straits Times* (Kuala Lumpur) "If there is discrimination against Myanmar, it is discrimination against ASEAN You may find other countries in ASEAN also deciding not to attend "

➢ President of Cuba Fidel Castro addresses a ceremony in Havana to mark the start of the New School year and mocks the news of his death circulating in Miami (US) The Cuban leader stands in pouring rain to finish his speech and declares "Say Good bye to your hopes, imperialists, new generations of Cuban will take over even when we are dead and gone"

September 3 ➢ Washington informs the UN, under the scheme for voluntary data submissions on arms transactions, that the US delivered 24 "large artillery guns" to Pakistan in 1996

➢ Sri Lanka Government issues a statement, based on the reports submitted by three commissions appointed by President Chandrika Kumaratunga, admitting that nearly 17,000 Leftists were killed or disappeared in the 1989-90 government crackdown on the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (People's Liberation Front) which was declared a terrorist organisation

September 4 ➢ Congressman Gary Ackerman and Congressman Frank Pallone, participating a US House of Representative discussion on the amendment to the Foreign Aid Bill, introduced by Republican Congressman Dan Burton, opposed the proposed $ 56 million cut US aid slated for India

➢ Former Prime Minister of Pakistan Benazir Bhutto says in an interview with the Islamabad daily *The Nation* that Nawaz Sharif had come to power after "totally capitulating before India and to other external pressures without getting anything in return"

➢ Three suicide bombers blow themselves up on a crowded pedestrian mall in Jerusalem killing at least five and injuring scores of others The attack is owned by the radical group HAMAS which threatens more bombings if Israel does not release detained Palestinian militants by September 14

September 5 ➢ Malaysian Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohammad, addressing the National Assembly on behalf of his United Malaya National Organisation, warns his people of the mounting intolerance by Muslims against those "who do not subscribe to their preachings" and calls on them to safeguard the true teachings of Islam before extremists get the upper hand

➢ Speaker of the US House of Representatives New Gingrich blames Yasser Arafat for the killings in Israel as he says "if you allow a murderer to live in your house you share responsibility for his bloody action"

➢ After being criticised that the royal family has been too aloof from the grieving people, Queen Elizabeth II addresses the nation paying tribute to Diana, Princess of Wales, as "an exceptional and gifted person"

September 6 ➢ Diana, Princess of Wales, is laid to rest in the grounds of the Spencer family home at Althorp Park, Northamptonshire Her coffin was brought on September 5 from the Royal Chapel in St James Palace to the Kensington Palace, home of her former husband Prince Charles, from where it is carried on a gun-carriage over a distance of 4 5 km to the Westminster Abbey for the Funeral Service attended by a select gathering of 1900 persons from across the globes Her brother, Earl of Spencer, delivers the "funeral oration" John Elton sings his farewell tribute to the "Candle in the wind", and the final 120-km journey to Althorp Park is watched by the millions on the giant TV screens at various places in London, by people in other towns, other countries telecast live by the BBC and more than two million on the route of the cortege

➢ Jatiya Party, the third largest party in Bangladesh Parliament, decides to quit Sheikh Hasina Wajed's Government of National Consensus, and to play the role of Opposition, says *Bangla Bazar Patrika* quoting the party's leader Hussain Mohammad Ershad, the former President of Bangladesh

➢ South African President Nelson Mandela, in an interview with the Egyptian daily *Al-Ahram*, urges Israel to implement all peace accords signed with the Palestinians ■

Posted at CPSO in New Delhi on September 12/13, 1997 **Delhi Postal REGD No DL-11037/97**
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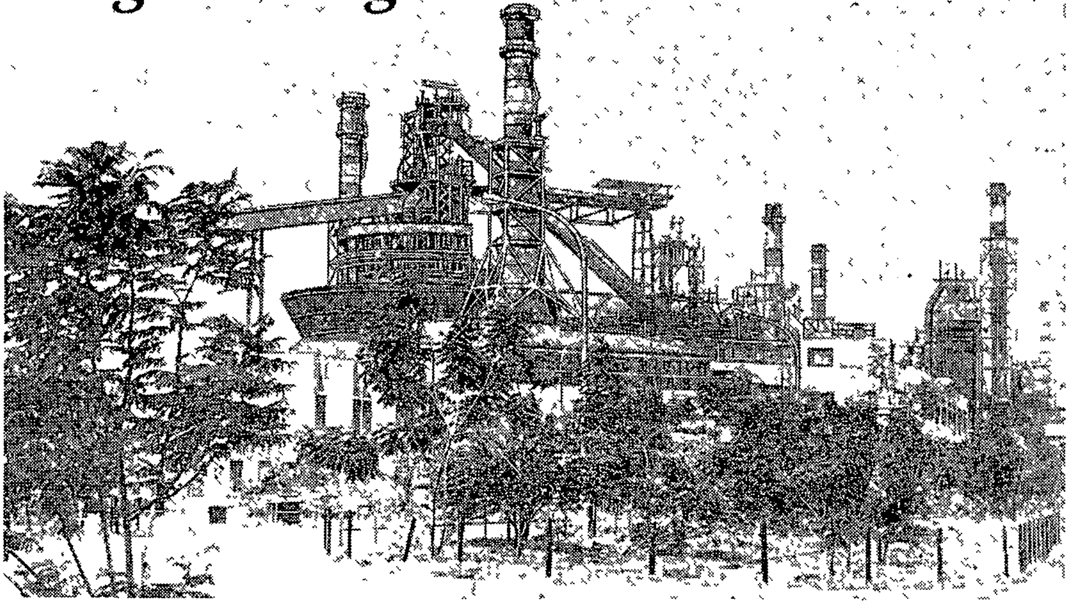

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Edited and published by Sumit Chakravartty *for* PERSPECTIVE PUBLICATIONS PRIVATE LTD, 1E/12, "Sewak House" (First Floor), Jhandewalan Extension, New Delhi-110055 Tel 7516763, 7516893 *Printed at* NEW DELHI PRINTERS, 20/7 Old Market, West Patel Nagar, New Delhi-110008 *Editor* Sumit Chakravartty *Editorial Adviser* Nikhil Chakravartty *General Manager* Praveen Mehta *Executive Manager* Jasjit Kay Nagra

Mainstream

VOL XXXV No 41 September 20,1997 Rs 7

K.R. NARAYANAN

Why we should Redouble our Efforts to achieve Mass Literacy

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

Reasserting Nuclear Option : Need of the Hour

KAMALA PRASAD

Interface of Politics and Crime

HARISH CHANDOLA

The Changing Chinese Earth

ARUN KUMAR'S "MACRO-ECONOMIC FRAMEWORK FOR PETRO-GOODS PRICING"

Indo-Pak : Emerging Reality

The third round of India-Pakistan talks at the level of Foreign Secretaries of the two countries has opened in New Delhi amid apprehensions of a hark back into the past setting of acrimony and suspicion heightening tensions between the largest neighbouring states of South Asia Besides the recent flare-up on the border (that is, the Line of Control) in J & K that only strengthened fears of renewed hostilities, the news of 'tit for tat' expulsion of members of the High Commissions of each state by the other making the headlines provided a measure of the enormity of the task of casting off the burden of the past Yet the fact that the leaders of the two countries have given a new direction to the talks despite all such obstacles on the path of progress gives an indication of the maturity of the civilian leaderships at the helm in India and Pakistan

In fact the element of uncertainty in the holding of the talks, the projection of which was largely the handiwork of some sections of the media in the two countries having a vested interest in perpetuating the Indo-Pak conflict, could be removed only with the timely intervention of Prime Minister I K Gujral through his talks with his Pakistani counterpart's confidant and the Information Minister, Mushahid Hussain (himself a distinguished journalist), in Calcutta last weekend after Mother Teresa's funeral The two Foreign Secretaries too have offered sufficient proof of both countries' desire to continue the dialogue despite their known differences over a host of issues, including the J & K problem If anything, both of them have in their public statements testified to their keenness to ensure a marked advance over whatever had been agreed upon earlier, that is, when the last round of talks took place in Islamabad on June 23 This was more explicit in Pakistan Foreign Secretary Shamshad Ahmed's statement, though Foreign Secretary K Raghunath's assertions were in no way less forthcoming on the subject In Shamshad Ahmed's words

> We had agreed on a mechanism to address in a purposeful and integrated manner all outstanding issues including the issue of Jammu and Kashmir Our discussions (now) will focus on operationalising the agreed mechanism

Raghunath also spoke of the June 23 agreement "to set up a mechanism for conducting our talks", and affirmed

> In our discussions in the next few days, we envisage working further with the Pakistan delegation to give concrete shape to this mechanism

These are not mere statements of intent They are vested with substance and content as well As such these cannot be interpreted as empty words reflective of just an exercise in rhetoric

None is being oblivious of the complex nature of India-Pakistan relations The magnitude of the problems dogging bilateral ties cannot be overlooked by any serious observer of the Indo-Pak scene Yet a new dimension has been added to these ties with the civilian governments in the two states—mirroring the democratic aspirations of the peoples—displaying exceptional maturity in not allowing the obstacles

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to hamper or stall the process of dialogue

Shamshad Ahmed was of the opinion that "given the political will and sincerity of purpose, we see no reason why this (dialogue) should not mark the beginning of a process which would ultimately lead to cooperative and good neighbourly relations between our two countries" He qualified his observation with the assertion

> This is what the Prime Ministers of the two countries desire for the common benefit of the peoples of our region

The commitment of those two leaders—Gujral and Nawaz Sharif—to South Asian peace and Indo-Pak amity has been conveyed in various ways in recent days Despite the powerful jingoist lobbies and forces in both the countries they are unable to turn the clock back as in the past The leaderships' maturity apart, the groundswell of public opinion in both the states opposed to war and tensions is foiling the warmongers' designs It is this phenomenon which holds the promise of better future for our two peoples The ongoing Foreign Secretary level talks also illustrate the two governments' sufficient capacity to work out the modalities of a new understanding between the neighbouring countries without relying on alien crutches extended by overseas interested "third parties" This is the most positive feature of the emerging reality on the Indo-Pak front that needs to be enriched through constructive action in the coming days '

September 17 S C

Introspection-50

K F RUSTAMJI

All our systems, all our methods, all that we are doing wrong in administration ought to be reviewed by us in fiftieth year Introspection should be our theme The desire to get rid of all that is holding us back our driving force Instead we are preoccupied in telling the world how pure and perfect we are, how much we would like all to come and celebrate with us

The primary purpose of our democracy should be to create an awareness of straight living, of the benefits of science, of the manner in which the millions of this land who are starving and handicapped by poverty can be helped to improve the quality of their life We have not even tried to bring the people into the process of government Once the election has put the party in power, there is no way in which the people are kept in touch with what is happening There is deception, concealment, even the denial of justice All that matters is the exercise of power, the conferring of some advantage to relations, combined with hypocritical incantations about the desire to serve the people

Have we got any method of giving simple scientific facts to the people in a manner which even a semi-literate could understand? I suppose our scientists keep in touch with what is happening in the world, the breathless pace of new discoveries and applications which have changed the very basis of agriculture and industry But how much of that is given to our masters, the electorate? How do we help them to decide which party, which candidate, will be the best for their development, who has the best technological qualifications? So far that has not been considered

The author is a distinguished police officer (now retired) A former Special Secretary (Home), he was a member of the National Police Commission set up during the tenure of the Janata Government at the Centre (1977-79)

Will our politics be the same as in the first fifty years? When the Mahatma and Nehru departed, the Congress dissolved in shambles, almost every leader proved unsuitable for high office The poor were restless, agitated by TV and the pangs of modernity What do the people know about global warming, or about greenhouse gases and floods, so important for an agricultural country? Cloning again is vital for us—Dolly and the fat calves, the mutated flies and frogs, the two-kilo potato of Germany that can feed a whole family What have we told them about chips? Or gene chips?

Twenty years ago when Neville Wadia pleaded with government to support genetic engineering in one of the Wadia hospitals, bureaucrats and medical men fought the proposal tooth and nail because there was no precedent to a joint venture of this type Today genes have become the most vital tool of human science and medicine

Every Ministry at the Centre and in the States should have a panel to discuss what has gone wrong and how it can be corrected Take the Home Ministry, for instance How do we reduce the delays in trials, make the police legal and effective? Indrajit Gupta for the first time has seen the truth in the recommendations of the National Police Commission How will that be followed up or will it be defeated by his own Ministry?

Finance will have to see how to protect the country from the world currency traders, who today are the deciders of the world's destiny George Soros in 1992 made billions in a week's time and nearly pushed Britain out of Europe Mexico was kept in tears, numerous funds became bankrupt These traders move dollars one trillion in daily wagers, more than everything that is traded in the normal way, and the world including the G-7 and 8 or the World Bank does not know what to do to stop the rampaging predators Today globalisation has produced a new species of bankers who gamble with other people' money They never lose, others do

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THE panel on External Affairs will have to decide how to shift the emphasis from Pakistan to the East, to China, and make friends of all the foreigners whom we insulted and threw out in the period when the foreigner was our biggest ogre Why does the world think we want to destroy Pakistan? Why should we? Just because it was born out of hatred? Supported by feudal landlords of Sind and Punjab who were afraid of land reform This nation, Pakistan, which ought to be our best friend was maltreated by dictators, reduced to penury by spendthrift leaders, some of its generals were corrupted by drugs, its wonderful people thrown to the fanatics of Shia and Sunni groups They have a Prime Minister in Nawaz Sharif who is a realist and we must support him We must assure him that we have no intention of using force that together our armies can be the Stabilising Force of South-East Asia We could settle Afghanistan, end the suffering in Sri Lanka, bring Burma back into the living room

If Jinnah had said at his deathbed, according to his doctor, that the creation of Pakistan was his biggest blunder, would it not be reasonable to infer that he wanted our two nations to live as friends, like the US and Canada?

We may not talk about it, we may not even notice it, but our biggest failure has been in education Rural education is almost non-existent Higher education still does not produce the men we need Or they scoot to other lands and show their worth We need a panel of our own men abroad to tell us what is lacking

Let us not forget our successes Our biggest fear in '47 was food shortage We increased food production almost four times We raised a fine army, which helped to keep democracy on an even keel What is it that we cannot do, if the people arise?

Wreckage I saw, but also I saw flowers
Hatred I saw, but also I saw love
—Conrad Aiken ■

AYODHYA JUDGEMENT

Sustaining Faith in Secular Ethos

KULDIP NAYAR

The judiciary once again does India proud In an atmosphere which emits chauvinism and raises a question mark about most Hindu intellectuals, the judgement by a special court in Lucknow is like a breath of fresh air and sustains faith in the country's secular ethos

Fortynine top leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) and allied organisations such as the Shiv Sena and Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) have been held guilty for conspiring to demolish the Babri Masjid Among those conspirators are BJP President L K Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi, Uma Bharati and Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray All wear *Hindutva* on their sleeves and run down secularism A *prima facie* case has been proven against them for rioting and creating religious hatred

No doubt, the judgement has come late—many judges were transferred for various reasons—and the general impression was that the culprits had got away But justice delayed is not justice denied The demolition was a conspiracy to destabilise the country by communalising the polity These are crimes which should disqualify the guilty from occupying seats in Parliament, Assemblies, Municipal Corporations and other local bodies The Election Commission has said convicts should not be allowed to contest elections If you were to read between the lines, it means that elected members who had been convicted should resign The BJP and the Shiv Sena, which talked about values in the special Parliament session, should not hesitate to ask chargesheeted members to quit elected posts voluntarily Both will gain prestige and set an example The reaction to the judgement should have been that of penance and humility

But even a liberal such as Atal Behari Vajpayee has put party above principle He says the grounds for the charges are flimsy and that the case is wrong and politically motivated What is wrong or motivated about it? The demolition happened in broad daylight and was witnessed by lakhs Most of those chargesheeted were present and watching Newspapers carried a picture of Uma Bharati on the shoulders of Murli Manohar Joshi, both gleeful Some pictures could not appear because the *kar sevaks*, armed with axes, shovels and ropes, destroyed many cameras and beat up photographers

That the Masjid was demolished stone by stone, with security forces quietly watching, is an accepted fact How does the judge spelling out the crime make it politically motivated? Vajpayee's logic that Thackeray and some others named were not present at the demolition is strange All conspirators who hatch a plot are not present at the scene of crime But they are as guilty as those who commit it The judge says the criminal conspiracy began in 1990 and culminated on December 6, 1992 His pronouncement minces no words while Vajpayee's is equivocal and full of holes

Worse, the judgement has made little difference to the BJP's game-plan Neither party leaders nor ideologues see harm in installing Kalyan Singh, one of the chargesheeted, as the UP Chief Minister Not long ago, the BJP had asked for the dismissal of Laloo Prasad Yadav, the then Bihar Chief Minister, because he was chargesheeted in the fodder scam It was a just demand, which attracted a lot of support Why should there be a different criterion for Kalyan Singh, whose crime is far more serious? He gave an undertaking to the country's highest judicial body, the Supreme Court, to protect the Masjid while the fact, as revealed by the special judge, is that he had already hatched a conspiracy to demolish it

The BJP spokesperson is quite right when he says that the demolition was "part of a political movement" because it was the slogan the party used to bamboozle Hindus to get votes in the last election That the BJP secured more than 50 Lok Sabha seats out of 85 in UP confirms this But if it is introducing the political angle to escape disqualification, it is wrong When Home Minister Indrajit Gupta elaborated on the Election Commission's statement on the electoral ban on convicts, he had in mind political movements such as strikes, satyagrahas, dharnas He did not think of the pre-meditated, calculated crime of destroying a religious place

The co-conspirator, the VHP, is at least honest It has admitted that Ram Mandir is a religious issue, not a political one Were the BJP to say openly that it saw nothing wrong in demolishing the Masjid to clear the site for the Mandir, it would be credible and categorical The party is beating about the bush Political reasons prompt its contradictory positions

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THERE is a familiar ring to the BJP's statements on the mosques that share the premises with temples in Varanasi and Mathura The party never said the Babri Masjid would be demolished Nor did it say the destruction was on its agenda Still its cadre did it In their statements on Varanasi and Mathura, Advani and Vajpayee have said many a time that the two mosques are not on the party's agenda However, they create doubts when they add the words "at present" or "not yet" Why not categorically say the two mosques will not be touched? Muslims might have a different attitude towards the demolished Babri Masjid if there was a written assurance from the RSS and its allied organisations—the BJP, VHP and others—that mosques in Varanasi and Mathura would stay unharmed Instead, many in the *Sangh Parivar* continue to talk about 3000 mosques What are Muslims supposed to make of this?

Some people fear that the court judgement may revive the passion which the Babri Masjid used to arouse before demolition Vajpayee had no compunction in saying that the day-to-day hearing of the case would have an effect on elections I have no doubt that the *Sangh Parivar* will try its best to foul the atmosphere They may even foment trouble Experience tells us so Yet, a democratic and secular polity has to take such risks because the alternative is to surrender to fundamentalists No country believing in the rule of law can afford that The nation has to assert itself It is not without risk, but condoning the crime is fraught with greater dangers Ultimately, the people will have to decide dispassionately By preferring not to fight the onslaught of communalism at this time in the interest of "peace", they may help create a Frankenstein which will one day devour the country's heritage and civilisation The world has experienced this

All the 49 who have been indicted should step down This is the least they can do to redeem whatever honour they—and the country—have been left with ■

DOCUMENT

Plea for Compensation to the Sufferers of Communal Riots

The following memorandum was submitted to the National Commission for Minorities by the Minorities Council of India

As early as in 1979-80 the National Commission for Minorities had "strongly urged upon the government to pass appropriate legislation and formulate schemes for giving compensation to the victims of communal riots", appending a note on the issue by Justice (Retd) H R Khanna (vide Third Annual Report of the Commission for 1980, Annexure IV, pp 64-74)

Since then most human rights groups inquiring into communal riots have generally treated such riots as failure of governance requiring the state to fulfil its legal obligation to pay adequate compensation to the innocent victims of riots

The Prime Minister's fifteen-point programme, which, though seems to accept the culpability of the district administration in the event of failure to prevent and control riots, goes only to the extent of providing immediate relief and adequate financial assistance for the rehabilitation of the victims of communal riots Even that much has never been done by the State Governments as a legal duty

In a landmark judgment delivered by Justice Anil Dev Singh of the Delhi High Court on July 5, 1996, in the Civil Writ Petition No 1429 of 1996, the learned court has taken the view that in the situation that obtained during the anti-Sikh riots in Delhi in 1984 the government "cannot escape the liability to pay adequate compensation to the family of the person killed during riots as his or her life has been extinguished in clear violation of Article 21 of the Constitution ", awarding to the petitioner, a widow of a person killed in rioting, an amount of Rs 2 lakhs with interest as compensation It also directed the Delhi State Government to identify all such cases and provide within four months a compensation of Rs 2 lakhs to them

The Government of the State of Delhi did not challenge the judgment Instead it speedily set up a machinery to identify all similar cases and actually disbursed the compensation amount with interest to the next of kin of those killed in riots in 1984

The learned court has also pointed out the need for enacting a law providing for adequate compensation to victims of riots The law, in its view, should also provide for locating responsibility for riots, and derelict officials of the state to make reparations to the victims and to face disciplinary proceedings

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In view of the above, the Minorities Commission needs to urge upon the State Governments of Assam, UP, Bihar, Delhi, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh and all other States where major communal riots have occurred since the 1980s till date to take speedy measures to provide compensation to the next of kin of all those killed in riots at the rate of Rs 2 lakhs with interest The rule of law requires the guarantee of equal protection of the law to all citizens irrespective of their origin or affiliation There is no reason why, for example, victims of riots at Bhagalpur in 1989, at Meerut-Malliana in 1987, at Nelli (Assam) in 1983, at Moradabad in 1980 and all those killed in the wake of the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Bombay, Bhopal and Surat and numerous other places in the country in 1992-93 should not be paid the same compensation as has been done to the Sikh victims of the Delhi riots of 1984

Since the Government of Delhi has not gone in appeal to the Supreme Court against Justice Anil Dev Singh's judgment, it should be treated as the law of the land on the issue of compensation to the victims of riots

In case the Commission has any doubts about the all-India applicability of this particular judgment, i may approach the Supreme Court to get its direction for the entire country

Simultaneously with this, the Commission need to take up the matter with the Union Governmen as one deserving top priority urging upon it to enac a law providing for compensation to the victims o communal riots and for due punishment to derelic officials

Iqbal A. Ansar
(Secretary-General
Minorities Council of India

Why we should Redouble our Efforts to achieve Mass Literacy

K R NARAYANAN

The following is the address of the distinguished President of India at the thirtyfirst anniversary celebrations of the International Literacy Day (New Delhi, September 8, 1997) over which he presided

It is a strange paradox that India with its high intellectual and philosophical traditions had for centuries its teeming masses steeped in illiteracy and ignorance We have often explained this paradox by the defensive and elitist argument that "when the wick is ablaze at the top the whole lamp is said to be burning", as one great Indian scholar put it If there was an area of darkness under the lamp it did not seem to affect the shining glory of the civilisation Poet Rabindranath Tagore once retorted by the pungent observation that "the masses are everywhere unreconciled to being the lampstand of civilisation"

There have been movements on behalf of and by the unlettered masses in India for liberation from ignorance The preaching of Gautama, the Buddha, in the language of the people in order to spread the light of *dharma* among the common folk, was one of the earliest exercises in this In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there arose in different parts of India social and religious reformers—Vivekananda, Raja Rammohan Roy, Ishwar Chander Vidyasagar, the Tagores, Mahatma Phule, Baburao Patil, the great Sikh Gurus, Sree Narayana Guru and a host of others who worked with crusading zeal for the social transformation of India and the spread of education among the people Over a hundred years ago Vivekananda declaimed that

> the chief cause of India's ruin has been the monopolising of the whole of education and the intelligence of the land among a handful of men

If that has been the chief cause of India's decline in the past, the main obstacle today to India's development and progress remains the same, namely, illiteracy and ignorance among the common people

Mahatma Gandhi realised this truth in the midst of our freedom struggle and made the removal of illiteracy a major plank in his constructive programme I recall how middle school and high school students even in remote villages like that of mine, had taken initiative, without any intervention by the state, to take adult education classes in the evenings for their relatives and neighbours After independence Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and his colleagues had launched programmes for mass education for the elimination of illiteracy Indeed we experimented in different systems and methods of education including a version of the Gandhian system of basic education More recently we introduced Technology Missions for education and currently we are engaged in a massive programme of Total Literacy Above all, we had a constitutional commitment to provide universal and compulsory elementary schooling for boys and girls between the age of 6 and 14 Today we are planning to make this a fundamental right of the people We can claim that we have made partial success in regard to these commitments and objectives The rate of literacy has risen from 20 per cent at the time of independence to 52 per cent today This is no mean achievement But it is far behind the targets we have placed before the nation, and we are behind other developing countries, even behind the sub-Saharan countries of Africa

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We have to think hard about this failure of ours We have to make an agonising reappraisal of our policies, programmes and performance in the field of primary education Somewhere there was a paralysis of political will, and even more than that the implementation was halting, inefficient, ineffective and perhaps often obstructive of the main purpose For a social and psychological reason for this, one may have to go back to the tradition of monopolising education in a few hands which was pointed out by Vivekananda We know that in olden days women and the lower castes were prohibited from learning the Vedas and the Shastras Even in more recent times, Dr B R Ambedkar has recorded how he wanted to take Sanskrit as a subject while he was at the Elphinstone College, Bombay and how he was denied permission to study the language, even though by his own efforts he studied the language and acquired proficiency in Sanskrit It may be that this old tradition is still lingering in our psyche and preventing the spread of literacy and education among the common people It may be that a certain fear of universalisation of education was lurking in the minds of sections of the ruling and implementing classes and agencies For, who are the illiterates in India? First of all, they are women of all classes and castes, especially, the women of the lower castes Secondly, there are men and women belonging to the minority communities, Scheduled Castes and Tribes—though much of the North-East is advanced in education mainly due to the work of Christian missionaries—and of the backward and deprived sections of our society It is precisely among these sections and classes of our society that literacy is at the lowest and the phenomenon of poverty is at its acutest Therefore, our strategy for universal primary education must be directed at these immense deprived sections of our society and taking into account their special circumstances and problems In India there is also the peculiar situation of the orthodox belonging to the upper classes shunning the facilities of public education that is actually available to them because of outmoded social customs We have to provide special incentives to draw them out into the process of education

In our country nearly 350 million people are illiterate We have the disgraceful distinction of having the largest number of illiterates in the world The cost of providing facilities for this immense number of people for elementary education is considerable But it is an indispensable investment in human development which is the basis of all economic and material development It is also the basis of all social development It has been proved beyond dispute that literacy and education is essential for social and economic progress We have to look at investment in education as a contribution to economic development

If we look at education from this point of view we would not hesitate to increase our expenditure in education to a more significant proportion of our national resources Indeed, this is the experience of the rest of the world, particularly that of the so-called "Tigers" of Asia Conscious of this the Government of India has announced that it would increase spending on education to six per cent of the GNP from the current 3 9 per cent

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THE problem of mass literacy in a country with 350 million illiterates is a highly complicated and gigantic one It cannot be achieved within the time-frame of 2005 AD that we have in mind without extraordinary measures The involvement of the entire community in addition to resource allocation and initiative by the government is required It is amazing that more than a hundred years ago Swami Vivekananda had anticipated some of the problems that we are encountering today He wrote once

> Suppose you start schools all over India for the poor, still you cannot educate them for the poverty in India is such that the poor boys would rather go to help their fathers in the fields or otherwise try to make a living than come to school But if the mountain does not go to Mohammed, then Mohammed must go to the mountain If the poor boy cannot come to education, education must go to him

This is precisely the problem we are facing with regard to elementary education for girls and boys of the poorer classes who have to work in order to eke out a living for their families The curse of child labour can be removed from this country only through education Indeed literacy is the answer to mass poverty and not the other way round To achieve this, as Vivekananda said, we have to take literacy and education to where the people live and work, to the fields, to the factories, to where the tiller is tilling, the pathmaker is breaking the stones, to the slums of our cities, to the building sites where the migrant labour is at work And special incentives like mid-day meals in schools, and economic incentives to girls in rural areas that we are providing today must be extended

Above all, a mass literacy movement to which sanitation, health awareness, etc , must be added, has to be launched in the country There are nearly four and a half million teachers in our primary, secondary and higher secondary schools They must be induced to participate in this mass campaign In addition, from the large army of the educated employed we can draw people for a literacy campaign It may be recalled that Gandhiji once advocated conscription of teachers for educating the masses We have, besides, more than 10 million civil servants in our country and they could be induced to devote part of their time to the literacy campaign, and in addition private industries and public sector establishments, and our innumerable temples and religious institutions could take up literacy and educational service In all this apart from the Central and State Governments, voluntary agencies and political parties have a crucial role to play I have a feeling that in this over-politicised land of ours unless the political parties take up constructive work as an essential part of their daily activities, basic tasks like literacy education will not be realised, on the contrary, public attention will be diverted from the basic needs of the people to the froth and bubble of political propaganda and disruptive agitations.

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COMMUNITY participation in the literacy movement must be an organised effort with teaching method adapted to a crash programme It is necessary to make learning a joyful and meaningful process related to the basic needs of life While university students are brought into this campaign we must ensure that they get credits or marks for the literacy work they do And modern methods of communications must be adopted in bringing to children and adults the blessings of literacy and general knowledge of the world

While we decry our general lack of achievement in raising the literacy level of people, we should not ignore the bright spots in the picture The achievement of 100 per cent literacy and human development to a level equivalent to developed countries by the State of Kerala is a glittering example As Amartya Sen and Dreze have pointed out,

> To achieve as much as Kerala has done for a population of its size is no mean record in world record

The population of Kerala is 30 million, equal to that of Canada and more than that of Sri Lanka, Costa Rica, Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, etc, countries that are held up as models of educational and human development It is time our educationists looked at the Kerala experience carefully, and also noted that Goa, Mizoram, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh have attained high levels of literacy and Tamil Nadu and Karnataka are catching up rapidly In the States of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, West Bengal and Maharashtra also there are bright spots of achievements I commend particularly the districts of Sikar and Pali in Rajasthan and Sangli in Maharashtra whose achievements have been honoured today with the Satyen Maitra Memorial Literacy Award

Literacy and education, it has been established, is the strategic factor in developing and elevating a society for making its economy more productive and for raising the quality of life of the people It is the key to raising the health status of the people, for controlling the hitherto uncontrollable growth of population, for drastically reducing infantile mortality, and for ultimately abolishing poverty and raising the quality of life of the people Let us therefore redouble our efforts to achieve mass literacy by the target date of 2005 AD Let me conclude by recalling the words of a Hindi poet who has said

शिक्षा की यदि कमी न होती
तो ये ग्राम स्वर्ग बन जाते

Jai Hind! ■

Reasserting Nuclear Option

NEED OF THE HOUR

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

In the midst of all the demonstration of mourning for Princess Diana to those for Mother Teresa, came Prime Minister Gujral's refreshing reiteration of India's nuclear policy On September 8, addressing in New Delhi a high-powered seminar of nuclear scientists including the representative from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) at Vienna, Gujral has categorically repeated the well-known official position of India with regard to nuclear energy, which Parliament under Indira Gandhi had asserted with the sole dissenting voice of M R Masani This keeps the country's nuclear option open while asserting that India on its own has no policy for the use of nuclear weapons

Since then, particularly in the last few years of open-door market reforms of the economy, there was the apprehension that the firm stand on the nuclear energy question might be diluted so that some dubious routes could be found to sign the NPT particularly its more stringent version the CTBT When Prime Minister Gujral was found to have chosen Dr Bhabani Sengupta to join his staff, this fear was heightened as Sengupta was long known to have favoured the NPT, if not the CTBT But the policy was not changed, though Sengupta had to quit the government Further, it was known that this country having refused to sign the NPT, has been in effect debarred from receiving nuclear know-how from the advanced industrial countries of the West Despite all the confusion over his coming meeting with President Clinton, the Prime Minister has reiterated India's long-standing position on the question of nuclear weapons option This will be reassuring to his countrymen more than anything else that he could possibly have no route open now to yield on this point to the US which has long made it the key issue for practically every US statesman and publicist descending from Washington

Prime Minister Gujral's statement was expected as a response to Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's public disclosure the day before that Pakistan possessed the nuclear option as well—an admission which was so long officially evaded in Islamabad In a sense, the decks are now cleared with both sides frankly stating their respective positions, and the negotiation for durable peace between the two countries could now proceed frankly and without equivocation The candid recognition of this "subcontinental reality" will certainly help to clear the air for a realistic understanding of each other's position and may help towards a better understanding between the two—the goal to which Prime Minister Gujral is already committed

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For long, it was widely known in this country that Pakistan was setting up its own nuclear weapons installations despite all the noise about the Pressler Amendment It is generally believed in New Delhi that the Chinese Government has throughout been helpful to Pakistan on this score, it is even suggested that the Chinese help has been crucial for Pakistan on this issue Obviously, the question of nuclear deterrence is now the order of the day, since both India and Pakistan have more or less conceded that they would go in for the nuclear weapons deterrance if necessary There is nothing to hide in this stand rather it is a clear-cut unambiguous stand which may be helpful to both sides It is true at the beginning there would be plenty of noise over these official disclosures, but the more realistic among the diplomats of both the countries can no doubt make use of these definite positions Whether India and Pakistan would from now on start speaking as responsible nuclear-weapons powers, it is for the seasoned diplomats on both sides to take up the quest for peace and start building an enduring edifice of good neighbourliness But, as it is said, once the decks are cleared, talks can proceed with a touch of realism without rancour

As for the public opinion at home, Prime Minister Gujral is well aware of the fact that an overwhelmingly large section of the public favours a foreign policy based on nuclear strength This was the reason why Indira Gandhi had such a large amount of support after the Pokhran explosion Since then the constituency has grown if one were to take a look at the stand of different political parties The US pressure on New Delhi for signing the NPT ha hardly yielded any result, a point which the great power nuclear club could never understand In thi country, the US is the most unsuited among the nuclear powers of the West to put pressure on India to desist from the nuclear bomb The fact that the heinous crimes on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were perpetrated by no other power but the US—the strange isolation in nuclear guilt—has made Washington the least suited to propagate the virtues of nuclear chastity among the countries of Asia If one had analysed objectively the response to the Chinese and the Indian assertions in the direction of nuclear advance, it would be clear that despite the knowledge of the deadly powers of the nuclear weapon, the fact that Asian countries are not at all disarmed in this sphere has hardly produced any adverse reaction There may be some concern in this country about the Chinese nuclear technology, but this is nothing compared to the resentment and hostility roused by the Cold War nuclear rivalry that dominated the world Lately, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the manner in which the Western powers have treated the question of dismantling the nuclear weapons could only result in worse bitterness, although the obvious humiliation has been covered by diplomatic exchanges

Today, there has cropped up a body of opinion in our country—and perhaps in Pakistan too—which swears by nuclear non-proliferation Massive propaganda literature on the part of this tribe of do-gooders has flooded the country, and one hears many voices in the media which pleads for nuclear non-proliferation However, if one takes a wider view of the situation, it will be clear that all these strenuous intellectual exercises have hardly touched the fringe of public opinion in this country The fact that powerful nuclear giants have been trying to pressurise India to submit to the NPT and now to the CTBT is having its reverse effects There can be no nuclear globalisation unless and until the big nuclear powers are forced to shed their own primacy and solemnly assure the world public that they themselves would abjure formally and irrevocably their nuclear superiority over the others This is a point which our pious crusaders against nuclearism have to bear in mind Unless and until they join in open crusade against the US nuclear hegemony in the world, all their good work for spreading the message of de-nuclearised peace would go in vain

One would expect Prime Minister Gujral to explain this dispassionately to President Clinton should the question be raised once again during their expected meeting ■

PLANNING BY THE PEOPLE

Kerala's Response to Development Crisis

R.K. RATH

For over four decades, the governments in India have been planning for the poor Today, half our people are in or close to poverty Out of sheer necessity, and learning from experience, Kerala is now trying out, as part of the Ninth Five-Year Plan, a process of planning by the people themselves
This article outlines the process on its way to become a social movement across political divisions
In an accompanying note, we carry the views recently expressed by E M S Namboodiripad on what needs to be, but is not being done
Dr Rath works with the UNICEF He recently toured Kerala —Editor

Despite the acclaimed advantages of devolution of power and decentralisation of planning and repeated commitments made to these aims, the planning process in India has, so far, remained a highly centralised exercise It is bureaucratic in nature and mainly financial (at best physical) in content There has been very little serious effort to permit planning capabilities to develop at the people's level Even the State Plan, more often than not consists of mere aggregations of departmental schemes trimmed or modified to suit the national framework and targets It is in this context that the politically empowered Kerala State Planning Board resolved at its very first meeting to initiate a people's campaign for reversing the planning process in order to enable people through their panchayats and municipal bodies to draw up their own Ninth Plan schemes within their respective areas of responsibility It is expected that 35 to 40 per cent of the Ninth Plan would consist of schemes formulated at the local level to be implemented with the people's active involvement

Decline of Productive Sectors

THE campaign assumes importance from the point of view of the current crisis within Kerala's widely acclaimed development model The crisis encountered by the State is widely noted and the focus of attention of debates and studies has rightly turned to the chronic lack of growth of the productive sectors of the economy, despite the respectable social indicators

The crisis in productive sectors is manifested in the virtual stagnation of the agricultural sector, the deplorably low level of productivity of important crops, growing apathy among cultivators, structural debility of the industrial sector littered by ailing traditional industries, rapid deterioration of the power situation and overburdening of the fragile eco-system

Quality Erosion in Public Services

The threats faced by the different dimensions of social life are equally severe For instance, the deterioration in the quality of services offered by crucial service sectors, such as education, public health, and transport has emerged as a major problem In addition, the stagnation of the productive sectors has worsened the fiscal position of the State and made it incapable of making any effective intervention The contemporary crisis has already started affecting the redistributive gains of the past and the standard of living of the people

A Potential Social Movement

The focus of social movements, which made the Kerala model workable, has so far been mainly on the aim of equity in distribution of wealth and income But it is becoming increasingly evident that the pursuit of equity cannot be maintained in the absence of economic growth The people's campaign for the Ninth Plan is an initiative to build creatively on the legacy of collective social intervention in order to face the contemporary challenge of development

A New Development Culture

THE campaign for planning by the people seeks to motivate and bring together the following groups of people in every locality in the preparation of the Ninth Plan

First, the elected representatives themselves were made aware of their responsibility and equipped for a new style of team-work

Second, the officials were reoriented to shoulder the planning responsibility under the direction of the panchayats

Third, the expertise of locally available non-officials was made available to the panchayats and municipal bodies Unlike most villages in India, every village in Kerala has a large number of educated people, many of them with technical and professional qualifications as well as practical work experience The number of retired experts is also substantial The campaign strives to motivate all of them to come out and actively participate in local level planning

Fourth, the mass of the people, who, even in a State like Kerala, continue to remain passive objects of an impersonal, remote-controlled development process, were awakened and energised for a new democratic participatory approach to improve their own daily lives

And *finally,* the many mass organisations of people were oriented to mobilise their members for common development initiatives that cut across party politics and other conventional decisions

In short, a major change has come about in the attitude of officials, voluntary experts, elected representatives and the people at large. This is the basis for the people's campaign for the Ninth Plan By this, it is hoped to create the atmosphere for a new development culture, devoid of narrow party politics and rivalries on issues that hardly touch the people's lives

Elements of the Campaign

The immediate objective of the campaign is to ensure that panchayats/municipal bodies prepare and prioritise a shelf of inter-related schemes, in a scientific and participatory manner, and the informed choice of concerned people as expressed in their own Assembly in compact rural and urban neighbourhoods so that programmes for the Ninth Plan can be selected from them according to priority This process of planning from below was initially divided into five phases Each phase was preceded by a preparatory stage, the most important component of which was the training of Resource Persons (voluntary workers, officials and people's representatives) at various levels

Identifying Needs

The *first phase* in this people's planning process was the identification of the needs of the people and the existing gaps in development at the local level This was achieved through open discussion in the Gram Sabha in each panchayat and in the Ward Conventions of municipalities About three million people participated in the Gram Sabha and Ward Conventions specially convened for the purpose

Choice of Options

The key event of the *second phase* was the organisation of development seminars at panchayat and municipal levels At these seminars, integrated solutions for the various problems identified at the Gram Sabha/Ward Conventions, were worked out Apart from the representatives selected by the Gram Sabhas and Ward Conventions, the seminars were attended by all the key officials and invited experts from the locality and outside

An objective assessment of the natural and human resources and the related development tasks was made through systematic recording, data collection, rapid appraisal techniques such as transit walks and semi-official reviews of ongoing programmes This culminated in the preparation of development reports These reports, totalling more than 100,000 printed pages in all are a virtual compendium of local history, resources, problem analysis and development potential

Action Proposals by Task Forces

The development seminars at the panchayat and municipal levels arrived only at broad statements of solution to various development problems The *third phase* of the campaign converted these solutions into project/scheme proposals in a format that could be included in the Plan The Task Forces formed at the development seminars in 13 key development areas like health, education, agriculture, etc, prepared project proposals based on the development reports

Plan at Panchayat and Municipal Levels

The *fourth phase* of the campaign involved the actual formulation of the panchayat or municipal plan. As the Ninth Plan allocations for the local bodies came to be clearly known, proposals and schemes were selected from the shelf of projects that had been prepared by the Task Force

District Plan

The *fifth phase* started with the organisation of district and block level development seminars and integration of the local plans at the block and district levels

Voluntary Technical Corps

A recent meeting of the State Planning Board has resolved that a district *sixth phase* for project appraisal be included in the people's planning process The main task in this phase is to examine the technical feasibility, financial viability and social acceptability of the project included in the plans of the local bodies This was done by a competent and responsible agency so that necessary technical and other sanctions were easily obtained for the projects

A comprehensive list of potential retired and non-official experts in the State was prepared Any expert who was willing to spend at least one day a week to render voluntary help to the panchayats was enrolled in the VTC

Phasing of Tasks

Around 150,000 projects were appraised The evaluation was not for selection or rejection but to actually refine and finalise the projects The projects were divided into two categories

i) projects that are included in the Annual Plan (1997-98),
ii) projects for subsequent years

The former category required more thorough appraisal Technical specifications and designs were determined and finalised

The latter group required only a broad appraisal as to technical feasibility and financial viability The appraisals were carried out not only with respect to panchayats and municipalities but also for levels upstream

Project Appraisal

There was a team of up to fifty to sixty experts in every block and municipality, and there were 10,000 experts in the State as a whole Since the team is an official body, eligibility for membership in the Project Appraisal Team was based on prescribed qualifications Members will have a certain minimum experience in any development sector alongwith a professional or post-graduate degree The specifications for educational qualification are relaxed in the case of people with compensating experience

A district level convention was arranged at which details of the appraisal work, responsibilities as members of the expert team and other arrangements were discussed An orientation course was also organised for the members in every district Every block was assigned its group of experts Once the projects were appraised, workshops were organised at block levels in which representatives of the Task Forces took part Comments and suggestions were discussed, corrections made and projects finalised and cleared Special consultants were appointed for each of the development sectors

Way Ahead

IT may be too early to speculate on the future of this imaginative initiative to mobilise professionals and experts in support of people-led local level development But this phase of the campaign will, by its very nature, have the inherent potential to develop into a path-finding social movement backed up not only by government but also by concerned intellectuals, experts and social activists Further, the movement is to be carried forward to the implementation stage, after completing the current phase of the new planning process ■

People's Planning: The EMS View

Presiding over the meeting of the high-level guidance committee of the People's Plan campaign on September 6, 1997 at Thiruvananthapuram, E M S Namboodiripad, the veteran CPI-M leader, criticised the Kerala Government (led by his own party), for its failure in devolving real power to the people He charged the government with negligence in amending the panchayat and municipal rules so as to ensure the transfer of power He wanted the present rules to be completely restructured for total participation by the people in the planning process

Namboodiripad commented that the implementation of the projects determined by the Gram Sabhas and the Ward Sabhas was being supervised and controlled by the government The plan projects should be implemented by the people themselves, with the support of the government Under the present dispensation, he said, the power transferred to the people was being taken back The reluctance to hand over powers was there at all levels, ranging from the Ministers, Members of the Legislative Assembly, bureaucrats and the panchayats themselves The bureaucracy, across the layers, was the main hindrance to the devolution process

Alongwith the devolution of powers from the State Government to the Gram Sabhas and Ward Sabhas, Namboodiripad wanted an end to the centralisation of power in New Delhi What could be done at the local level should be done there itself, for example, a mutual cooperative venture is required locally for judicious use of land and labour resources in each panchayat, with the Gram Sabha playing the key role in solving strange phenomena like scarcity of labour coexisting with unemployment

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Interface of Politics and Crime

KAMALA PRASAD

India's Election Commission has forced a decisive phase in the struggle to cleanse the electoral politics of crime and its consequences for the rule of law To the question whether law-makers can be law-breakers, its answer is that Parliament in the Representation of People's Act intends an emphatic 'no' The legal opinion generally favours this view The Commission has written to the government to strengthen the legal provisions further The enforcement of the legal powers will rest with a large number of Returning Officers This is a purely legal means to achieve political purpose

The political class agrees in the diagnosis of the disease but not the remedy It emphasises the political character of the problem Criminalisation does not affect just the electoral process It reflects the larger issue of evolution of the country's politics and the character of political parties It also reflects the weaknesses of the state institutions in generating trust in the public about impartiality, fairness, and justice Therefore, the Lok Sabha in its resolution at the conclusion of the special session has committed that

> political life and process be free of the adverse impact on governance, of undesirable extraneous factors including criminalisation

It goes on to pledge that

> all political parties shall undertake all such steps as will attain the objective of ridding our polity of criminalisation or its influences

This is an inclusive rather than an exclusive and purely administrative and legal solution to a problem on which there is no difference of opinion

Roots of the Problem

This differing perception symbolises the current state of politics It lays bare a situation where politics of confrontation between institutions of the state are considered a desirable means of consolidating their roles It expresses concern about the failure of the political system to fashion a vision of the civic society suited to fair and peaceful pursuit of the objectives of the Constitution as in its Preamble It is a censure of all institutions but more so the political This is so because the defiance of law by the law-makers is what makes us a soft state There is political tolerance of crime and the criminals and use of the state power to sustain this The protest movements do exist but they face the ruthless application of the coercive law enforcing machinery of the state The electoral code of conduct is violated by all parties but those in government are seen as custodians of misuse Lack of political organisation, voters education and meaningful mobilisation is sought to be compensated by recourse to the misuse of state power The bulk of the population has to suffer or has the feeling of suffering the criminally-oriented This overbearing feeling is worse than the reality It has made politics a tainted profession and even good performance is ignored The claim that all politicians are not bad or corrupt falls on deaf ears

The author is a former Chief Secretary in the Bihar Government

Crime arbitrates political differences when organisation of debate and socialisation becomes ineffective There are two faces of all political organisations—the public and the private The public face works to enter representative bodies and capture power This is a very legitimate end This end is believed by many to be achieved through illegitimate means This is reflected in the quality of workers, their methods of mobilisation through intimidation, use of arms—legal and illegal—for coercing allegiance, trying to manipulate the course of justice, and thus establish a tainted power base This is the private face No wonder splitting of political organisations has been the destiny of this country since we won freedom Integrative political process as also social and political consolidation has remained a mirage The claim to leadership in more parties than not rests not on the progressive rise in an organisation with inner-party democracy and settled convictions and commitments but on the capacity of a leader to deliver votes by means fair or foul Crimes of all descriptions become a welcome qualification in the bargain

It is difficult for the administration to work in isolation. It is part of a political design though under a legal framework Patent illegality is avoided most of the time However, the rule of detachment follows Attachments of politicians are known, more so to the police authorities Civilian officers can guess bias and prejudice in contract, supplies, and administrative placements The process can still be tainted

The discipline of political control is so ingrained that the line of least resistance is the rule This is so since over the years unholy alliances have been forged between the public servants and politicians on the basis of caste, community, regional, and other considerations Plain criminals also benefit from such solidarity On the other hand, the political operation of the disciplinary and vigilance processes has bothered the honest and the upright more than the weak and the compliant The administration is forced to be a handmaiden of political purpose Other institutions may put it against the administration but they are no different in practice and net outcome

Serious consequences follow as fruits of politicisation The public law enforcing authority is eroded The respectable citizen goes to a police station under duress Harassment of citizens has become the hallmark of police administration Senior officers feel helpless because of the attachments of their subordinates Investigation discloses clear bias in a large number of cases and is the cause of declining convictions Time was when Chief Ministers would rarely contact the Superintendent of Police Now the contact with the *thana* officers is a regular feature The head of the department is legally authorised to undertake transfer and posting of officers at this level but large-scale interference is common This has harmed the command structure of the organisation Political patronage has a price Crime is beyond control Complaints are not registered and low figures are displayed Politically sensitive cases are weakened and the means are many There is some resistance in the urban areas Media proximity also helps But the rural areas hardly have such means at their command There are people's organisations which take up larger causes They hardly have political recognition They are suppressed ruthlessly Insurrectionary activity is the result It is a tragic commentary on the working of our democratic institutions that such movements have to face not political dialogue but police and the courts of law Agrarian movements in the Naxal areas are only one such manifestation The local administration has made peace with such movements in many areas, the organised political parties have not

Herein lies a fundamental problem about the legal remedies to what is an issue for political reform Rajiv Gandhi was perhaps the only recent political leader to state that politicisation of the administration should be reduced, if not eliminated This has increased further in the last ten years The simple measure of reform suggested for Civil Service Boards in the meeting of Chief Ministers in May 1997 did not find favour with them! Will more litigation help? After all, the state pays for the forced litigation There are also withdrawal of criminal cases involving the politically attached In the reverse opponents are roped in many cases and great ingenuity is shown in applying the various provisions of the law Is there a will to surmount this deficiency in the rule of law? The answer has to be in the negative Has the administration of justice reduced the scope of misuse of law? The answer again is in the negative This is really the charge of our legislatures They have failed

Criminalisation of Politics

THIS is the answer to critics who single out the performance of the administration for the "jungle raj" There is a counter-demand presently that the administration needs a new identity There is a feeling that some change in the mindset of the past will follow only if it is insulated from partisan politics This will still work within a new basis for politics alone And this will require a reversal of the trends of the past

Centralised party machines are dependent on centralised mobilisation of funds The bulk of such funds is either from the immense black money in circulation or from the operation of official discretion in the transaction of work This has given space for power-brokers within the parties They wield immense clout with the party leadership A leadership beholden to such attachments has no escape from supporting criminal activities Money requirement has kept on increasing for running the party machine, for keeping the supporters' loyalty, for enlisting cheer leaders and, of course, for fighting elections All these factors work together Targetting election is relevant for the Election Commission But election is part of a larger political process of the organising parties, their activities, electorate education, and administration protection as a means of safeguarding the public and democratic process A corrupt and criminal party machine cannot be expected to promote a clean electoral process or a candidate choice free from the taint of crime or corruption The Lok Sabha has done well, therefore, to focus on the comprehensive political dimension of the problem

Why is criminalisation of politics so much in focus? Electoral malpractices have been attacked for sometime It is claimed that some advance has been made in making elections fairer But it is becoming a security operation rather than a purely political process It is surprising that those who attack the police for violating people's rights are now claiming greater purity under heavy police surveillance! The greater concern now is on the entry of convicted criminals in the law-making institutions A member of the Commission publicised the fact of 40 Members of Parliament and about 700 of State Legislatures having criminal records What a criminal record implies has not been clarified It is not clear if they have convictions and for what crimes On the other hand, Subhas Kashyap, the former Secretary-General of the Lok Sabha, has stated that of about 169 cases of this nature only three ended in convictions There are other risks in bestowing power of rejection of nomination papers on imprecise legal grounds to a large band of Returning Officers They are subject to local and other political influences and the parameter of surveillance must be clear beyond doubt That does not seem to be the case at present The Election Commission's commitment to the cause is unquestionable What is questionable is the effiacy of the legal course without relevant changes in the environment in which the institutions involved work

The use of criminal elements in elections is well known They are engaged in campaigning and in managing the voting at the polling booths They are known from the records of the Police Stations as also reputations in the local areas One MP told me once how such management was facilitated by the way the scheduling of polls in different constituencies is planned One-day polls do neutralise such factors During the 1991 elections in Bihar a large number of criminals, even those on bail, were rounded up and the areas cordoned off for the polling days But this requires equal treatment for all since there are considerable chances of miscarriage of justice The administrative agenda has to anticipate the candidates' agenda and act The candidates are rarely helpful One advantage in the use of criminals is that they do not demand money They seek protection on a continuing basis though, to pursue their profession under police protection. This patronage the politician provides This patronage is needed for manipulation of the charge-sheet, for help in securing bail, for privileges in jail and for freedom from police pursuit for as long as possible

Why has the incidence of criminalisation increased? The gains of official positions are many In the era of monopoly of power by one party the monopoly of firearms was with its supporters As politics became unstable and the struggle for changing the social bases of politics intensified, fragmentation of politics also appeared The cult of the gun became its accompaniment It was the application of the principle of balance of terror as the determinant of the electoral outcome This was behind the growth of illegal and crude arms A villager once told me confidently that country-made weapons did not require licence! The state power provides the means of getting legal arms now Socially, a leader with criminal records is accepted as he/she shows capability in delivering the personal favours promised Excessive electoral promises without later fulfilment have increased the attractions of the feared ones They may use unfair means but they are effective within their limited areas

The general impression of some parties benefiting from more criminals than others is misplaced During the 1995 Assembly elections the opponents of Laloo Prasad thought so A compilation by one of them showed that other parties had more candidates with criminal records than the then JD The gang warfare in UP and the political attachments of parties is no secret Maharashtra knows the power of the Shiv Sena over the criminal elements and accepts it for protection from the underworld The clout of Veerapan is coming to the fore gradually And yet the dacoits of MP could hardly make it to the elected bodies in strength The picture elsewhere is no different A wholesale takeover of the political process is hardly a near possibility It is the change in the character of the emerging leaders and parties that is frightening to the sophisticated accustomed to the old ways of politics There is a change in the character of politics and the standards of judgement must change The system has to contend with this change

Criminalisation, so understood, has to be seen in the total context Criminalisation of politics has to be made unattractive for the parties The current public outcry may itself make some difference However, it should not be presented in a way as to mean a censure of the emerging power structure in the country in replacement of the old That will be counterproductive What is legally prevented may become a more serious problem politically and socially As it is there is flight of industry and commerce from States like Bihar, vulnerable people avoid residence in crime-infested locations The faith of the common people for their peaceful existence is a precondition for eliminating criminals from politics The atmosphere of fear must be ended and the spectre of the heavy security state removed Otherwise, the call to end criminalisation in compartments is an exercise in tokenism

This is sustained from what led Indrajit Gupta of the CPI to plead that a more effective party-level action is called for Pramod Mahajan of the BJP has articulated that "a law prohibits you from doing a wrong but rarely inspires you to do a good", since "many of the problems stem from growing cynicism among the people to institutions which are supposed to provide justice", Nitish Kumar of the Samata Party warns that "provisions of the IPC are misused against politicians and using such convictions to debar politicians from contesting elections would seriously affect political life" A purely legal remedy to deal with the problems of political development of a changing society has serious limitations This is more so in the context of falling standards of all institutions But a dialogue between the Commission and the political parties must start to find an agreed basis for a move forward

Criminalisation, Corruption and Governance

THIS is necessary from the close links of good governance with an environment of trust, peace, integrity, and social consensus There is too much of divisive tendencies already in the polity These should not be augmented There is far too much piling of litigation It should not be increased further, if possible The courts are generally barred from the election process and all efforts should be made to retain a political process as such Individual action should not be separated from the context in which it has to operate

The efficacy of the legal remedies needs first to be confirmed in the supporting arenas Criminalisation is resulting in the politics of intimidation, coercion, elimination of opponents, and attraction that have made crime into an organised profession The application and enforcement of law has been ineffectual so far against this trend and it can be mended A mechanism of separating the political authority from controlling the processes of crime control in a partisan manner should be devised Parliamentary accountability of the police need not be weakened but the means to end day-to-day executive dictation must be ended The ending of the sovereign immunity of the police force will also breed responsibility This package may be the minimum to change the current environment of lack of trust in the legal action where police power becomes the arbiter

Criminalisation and corruption go hand in hand Corruption is illegal under the law Yet the increasing infrastructure of vigilance has led only to increase in the incidence of corruption What is involved is protection to the corrupt, acceptance socially of the corrupt, respectability in the political association, and all this because of the power of patronage The vigilance set up is hardly able to catch the really corrupt who carries on as a power-broker administratively and politically It is the public-private sphere interface that determines the level of corruption and its social acceptance We seem to have neglected to define the character of the civic society we are aiming to realise and organise and orient people towards that Criminality deals with administrative corruption but social corruption is more endemic and influences both criminality and integrity Politics has occupied a large space in the life of the country and must discharge its responsibility

All this sums up the problems of governance It is unfortunate that the government is accountable for everything All institutions have been brought under direct political control Statutory delegations have been subverted under the misguided operation of political authority Politics and centralised administration must be made to assign operational freedom where it belongs Voluntary action groups must be permitted to take over lager space in the sphere of delivery of services including criminal domain and jails They must assume the courage to resist authority where authority is misused This is relevant to all institutions of the state and not just the executive domain The coercive powers of the state should withdraw from the voluntary sector Freedom must assume some new meaning rather than the swan song of lack of foreign domination A good governance demands all this and is a precondition for freedom from cirminalisation and corruption

In the current situation, then, the cleaning of the election administration should be taken further by stages The pressures for long-delayed reforms should not be slackened The Lok Sabha resolution has already recognised this fact but it should be judged by urgency in moving ahead with actual legislation Secondly, a minimal legislation on the issues brought in the Election Commission circular should be enacted This is necessary to send a clear message to the country that Parliament has a consensus about dealing with criminalisation and electoral malpractices Finally, a new style governance under the coalition system should evolve the present impression that a coalition implies a weak government rather than a government that safeguards the interests of the weak and the conglomerate of smaller interest groups must be removed The voices of the weaker sections must not be submerged in the louder voices of the powerful as under majoritarian rule by single parties Rgrettably, that is the impression Actions speak louder than rhetoric and pronouncements The parties to the present coalition should decide not to fail the trust their constituents have put in them ■

A Macro-Economic Framework for Petro-Goods Pricing

ARUN KUMAR

Dr Kumar, a well-known economist, is an Associate Professor, Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi The following article is based on a paper the author presented at a workshop on petroleum goods organised by Binty, a consumer organisation (New Delhi, August 9, 1997)

Parameters of the Current Debate

Succumbing to pressure the government has increased the petroleum goods prices in India It has been argued that this was required in the light of the rising oil pool deficit It is further stated that if this deficit was not covered through increases in the prices of petro-products, the oil companies will not be able to import these products, adversely affecting the economy. A direct subsidy from the Budget has been ruled out since that will increase the fiscal deficit making a mockery of the budgetary targets and creating problems, specially, in moving towards Capital Account convertibility by the year 2000

Those resisting the price increase had argued that the oil pool account deficit is a result of past diversion of funds to the general Budget They suggest that this money should be returned by the Ministry of Finance before any price increase The reason for resisting the price increase is that it will be inflationary and it adversely affects the poor the most Petro-goods are basic goods (with a weight of 10 66 in the WPI) and when their prices rise, there is a cascading effect on all prices

Another issue raised in the context of pricing is that of cross subsidy to certain petro-goods There are two kinds of petro-products—the basic and the luxury goods Clearly, petrol and aviation fuel are largely consumed by the rich in society, and, therefore, are in the nature of luxury goods used for final consumption Diesel, naphtha and other such goods are used as energy and are inputs into production of other goods Therefore, increase in their prices is inflationary and this needs to be curbed Kerosene is used by the poor and for fuel Hence its price needs to be held stable to protect the poor against inflation

Why is inflation of such a deep concern to many Ninetythree per cent of the labour force in the country is in the unorganised sector and not protected against inflation Their living conditions deteriorate with inflation, resulting in social tension and political turmoil

Considering poverty and inflation, the principle of 'ability to pay', has been used for the petro-goods pricing Following this, basic goods and those consumed by the poor have been cross-subsidised by luxury goods In the recent past, voices have been raised against cross-subsidy, say, from petrol to kerosene and diesel It is argued that these goods are being misused, for example, in private vehicles or for adulteration of the higher priced goods, like petrol

The New Economic Policies launched in 1991 have emphasised reduction of subsidies in general to lower the fiscal deficit and the elimination of cross-subsidies which are supposed to be distortionary, and hence inefficient These policies also call for the globalisation of the economy with reduction in tariffs so that Indian prices approach international prices and the inflow of foreign goods takes place Consequently, there has been a flood of luxury goods which are highly energy intensive and given that India is short of energy, imports of petro-goods is on the rise (from 19 million tonnes in 1985-86 to 47 7 million tonnes in 1995-96)

Environmental degradation in India is a major issue Even though Indian per-capita consumption is amongst the lowest in the world, the country is amongst the worst polluted Our cities, rivers and air are some of the worst polluted This is resulting in a rapid rise in disease and ill-health with medical bills rising dramatically As energy consumption increases a further worsening can be expected

Rapid urbanisation in India has been encouraged by policy Unfortunately, it is of a highly concentrated nature with the growth of mega-cities and urban conglomerates This is highly capital and energy intensive—both of which we are short of This pattern of urbanisation is imposing a heavy social cost People are commuting long distances to work, requiring expensive energy and transportation For instance, Delhi requires Mass Rapid Transport which will cost upward of Rs 10,000 crores— twice the sum needed to give clean drinking water to the entire nation While the former will benefit only 10 million individuals, the latter will cater to 50 million These cities with expensive real estate are choking with the growth of slums and they are seething with crime—drugs, mafia, extortion, theft, kidnapping, etc Cheap energy can only accentuate concentrated urbanisation with its attendant problems

The Desirable Objectives of Policy

THE above description suggests that from the point of view of the consumers and of policy, inflation is a major concern But can prices be prevented from rising if costs rise? Clearly, costs have to be paid by someone in society The oil companies cannot continue to pay out more than they receive in revenues They will collapse, adversely affecting the oil economy of the country With mounting losses, they cannot obtain credit for imports so that shortages will appear in the markets leading to ill-effects The question is who should bear the costs?

For a while the Budget can bear the additional costs but as these costs mount, the deficit in the Budget will grow and force cuts in other essential items, say, on development or on social sectors So, policy must be consistent with the other essential requirements of society and be fiscally sound

The fiscal soundness of the Budget should not be achieved by diverting funds from their designated role to other uses, like has happened in the case of the oil pool account This fund was created to generate surpluses so that the oil prices could be stabilised Instead, these funds were diverted to providing budgetary support to lower the fiscal deficit This is like increasing taxes on the oil sector through the back door

Would it be a sound policy to increase taxes in the Budget and use these resources to lower prices? Clearly, this would encourage the increased use of energy and petro-goods and that would be detrimental to the environment Hence, policy must ensure minimisation of the use of these products both through pricing and other non-pricing mechanisms

Since the country is short of petro-goods, their increased consumption is based on imports Minimisation of the use of petro-goods is then necessary for the conservation of scarce foreig exchange which is being currently earned at a hig cost to the economy Even though the country' reserves are rising and are at record levels, thes are based on hot money flows and at a high interes cost to the economy This has meant that th economy has become susceptible to internationa speculation, like, in the case of Mexico earlier an more recently in the case of the Thai Bhat and othe currencies of the ASEAN nations The resultin instability in the Indian economy prevents th investment climate from improving with the resul that FDI inflow (even if desirable) is minuscule i comparison to what was sought Consequently, th inflow of technology remains insignificant

Minimising the use of energy requires tha concentrated urbanisation be discouraged Thi would save capital for other essential uses It woul also prevent the economy from becoming more an more high cost which is affecting adversely the poo in the economy Whatever policy is pursued mus take into account the interest of the poor and incom distribution should not be allowed to get mor skewed

In brief, the issue of petro-goods pricing and it consumption is a macro-economic issue which mus take into account the interest of the poor in societ the budgetary situation, the financial health of th oil companies, the inflationary consequences, th conservation of energy and foreign exchange an the saving of capital This, of course, is a partial lis but itself a daunting one

Analysis of the Situation

IT needs to be remembered that the *average* India prices of petro-goods are typically higher than th international prices While kerosene is much lowe in price, petrol is higher Since a bulk of the petro goods (raw material or the finished product) is no imported, the *average* Indian prices should hav been close to the international prices

The oil importing countries in the world face th same international prices of petro-goods and th cost of refining is more or less similar, so the cos of petro-goods should be roughly the same for thes countries Differences in internal (consumer or retail prices are a result of differences in the indirect ta structure For instance, in the US, the larges consumer of petro-goods, the price of petrol is o the order of Rs 12 per litre while in India it is Rs 2 per litre In Europe the price is two to 2 5 times th rice in the US to discourage consumption

In India, petro-goods bear a heavy burden of ndirect taxes Customs, excise and additional excise luties fetch the Central Budget Rs 13,000 and Rs 8000 crores respectively (in 1996-97) In addition o this, the sales taxes fetch additional amounts to he States

In essence, a direct subsidy from the Budget to the oil companies or to the consumers is not a subsidy but a return of the funds back to those from whom the funds were collected in the first place Of course, this does not take into account the issue of cross-subsidy which shifts incomes from one set of consumers to another

Such a scheme of first collecting the funds and then returning them is wasteful, involving various costs—administrative and economic For instance, the relative prices of goods change and the profitability structure of the oil economy gets affected Finally, as seen in the case of the fertiliser industry, subsidy from the Budget can make the industry inflate its costs in order to secure a higher subsidy without benefit to the consumer

In effect, what the above suggests is that a) first levying high indirect taxes and then subsidising is wasteful, and b) prices of petro-goods need not be raised to compensate the oil companies if the customs and excise duty structure is suitably altered However, this would increase the fiscal deficit unless alternative sources of tax revenue are found

The argument in the previous sections implies that if the prices are not allowed to rise, they should not be allowed to decline either so as not to encourage the increased consumption of these goods Note, in spite of the rapid rise in the prices of these products (the index has risen from 176 in 1990-91 to 333 in August 1996), their demand has grown (from 55 million tonnes in 1990-91 to 72 6 million tonnes in 1995-96) A rapid rise in consumption would be detrimental for the environment and the BOP

Cross subsidy needs to be continued so as to discourage luxury consumption and for reasons of equity and distributive justice If cross-subsidies are reduced or eliminated, then prices of goods consumed by the poor or which are basic goods would rise and this would affect equity adversely In fact, following this principle, the duty structure can be so adjusted that the element of cross-subsidy is retained

However, pricing cannot take care of all the problems The dramatic increase in personalised transport (four-wheeler personalised vehicle production has increased from 35,000 in 1983 to four lakhs last year) has increased vehicular pollution and is choking the city roads It requires heavy investment in roads and infrastructure which a poor country can ill-afford This is taking place in spite of dramatic increases in petro-goods prices like petrol To tackle this problem, non-price intervention and taxation would have to be resorted to Subsidised and efficient public transport in the cities can take care of much of this problem

Funds for such subsidies can be raised through taxation of private vehicles This will serve the twin purpose of discouraging private vehicle ownership and improvement in transportation for all Diesel driven private vehicles can be discouraged through a heavier tax on them

Concrete Proposals for the Oil Economy

THE above-mentioned objectives can only be fulfilled in the context of a comprehensive framework Ad hocism will not do since that will only create more contradictions One such framework was presented in the Alternative Budget in 1994 It proposed as a part of a comprehensive package

1 Immediate reduction/elimination in excise duties on basic goods, including basic petro-goods Excise duty to be retained on basic petro-goods to the extent required to absorb super profits of oil companies so that petro-goods prices are maintained at present levels Diesel and kerosene prices should be cross-subsidised by petrol and aviation fuel But subsidy is to be explicitly shown in the Budget
2 Reduction in customs duties on petro-goods to a level such that fluctuations in prices can be moderated A fund created for R&D in this area
3 Loss of indirect tax revenue to be made up through direct taxes so as to keep the revenue deficit unchanged For this a 10 per cent annual tax on all four-wheeled petrol vehicles and 20 per cent on diesel vehicles is needed Collection of corporate tax needs to be streamlined by eliminating certain currently allowed deductions which involve waste, like on transportation, advertising and entertainment
4 A transport policy for the nation is required It should be based on use of buses for short distances, railways for the long and medium haul and for commuter traffic Air travel for short and medium haul may be heavily taxed A cross-subsidy would be involved and this should be explicitly shown in the Budget
5 Cheap and efficient public transport should be encouraged This would also involve a cross-subsidy from the Budget Public transport should be run on

commercial lines with explicit subsidy from the Budget but the allowed rate of profit should be below the market rate Private sector can be encouraged within the above parameters Though the rate of profit is to be below the market rate, externalities will result in benefit to society as a whole

The above programme suggests that the citizens should demand from the government simplicity in taxes and subsidies explicitly shown in the Budget The citizens should demand adequate living conditions which should include, clean environment, efficient public transport, decentralised urbanisation and a dwelling unit close to the place of work ■

Punjab Police and the Recent Demand for Immunity

R M PAL

The demand for immunity for Punjab Police officers guilty of human rights violations may be viewed in the background, among other aspects of the situation, of cases pending before the Apex Court Let us here recapitulate a few instances of the directives and orders issued by the Supreme Court

The Court, on April 17, 1995, found five police personnel, including officers, *prima facie* guilty of gunning down in 1993 a couple in West Bengal who were suspected to be terrorists The Court observed

> Our worst apprehensions have come true The killings of the couple reveals a state of affairs when human life has virtually no value for officers in uniform, who are supposed to be protectors of human life We are indeed greatly distressed at the manner in which the incident took place

The Court directed that cases be instituted against police officials responsible for the outrage When the case came up before the Court on May 1, 1995, the Court, commenting on the callous behaviour of the police, said

> The police kill people in cold blood and then say the judgment is bad Their attitude appears to be I accuse, I judge, and I sentence

In another case of subsequent liquidation of seven members of a family from Bagga village of Amritsar district, the Chief Justice commented on May 4, 1995

> It is a serious matter, people are being killed, their whereabouts and (those of) their dead bodies are not known And the DGP (K P S Gill) quietly says that the petition has become infructuous No doubt we will ensure that the law is maintained and its majesty is upheld But what about the people who are being eliminated in this way? Who will be accountable for that?

The author, a former Principal of Rajdhani College, University of Delhi, is the Editor of the PUCL Bulletin *and an active crusader for human rights*

When the Additional Solicitor-General, K T S Tulsi, tried to defend Gill, the Chief Justice remarked

> You are asking for commendation from this Court of police officers who eliminate persons Seven people are dead—killed, and there is an evidence to it The whole thing is very disturbing I don't think you can assist the Court You are here only to hold brief for the police This is not the case you can defend

On November 15, 1995, the Court issued directives to the CBI to enquire into Jaswant Singh Kalra's disappearance from Amritsar Kalra, a human rights activist took up the case of cremation by the police of a large number of persons killed in fake encounters and suspected to be terrorists The Court commented that if the allegations are true, they would constitute the "most gory tale of human rights violations", and directed the Punjab Government to transfer the police officer, Ajit Singh Sandhu, from Taran Taran till the completion of the investigations of the case According to CBI reports submitted to the Supreme Court later, 2097 persons were cremated during two years out of which 585 were identified, and 275 partially identified The rest, 1238, remain unidentified

On January 29, 1996, the Supreme Court asked the CBI to prosecute 27 Punjab Police personnel, including an IPS officer, Vivek Misra, who were allegedly involved in the murder of four Sikh youths in Gurdaspur in January 1994

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THE recent tirade against human rights activists by the "patriotic" quarters which include the former Director-General of Police, K P S Gill, has also to be viewed against the background given above (It should be obvious that the attack is against the

Court also) The campaign intensified since the alleged suicide by a Punjab Police officer, Ajit Singh Sandhu, who had been facing criminal charges The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) is investigating the charges under the direction of the Supreme Court In particular, those relating to 43 cases of elimination ("unceremonious cremation") of people suspected to be terrorists, were under NHRC scrutiny

Gill and others like him advocate a policy of bending the law of the land in favour of police officers who "eliminated" terrorism in Punjab by liquidating hundreds of persons, including innocent citizens (Human rights groups have appealed to the Punjab Government to have a census of the human rights violations done) According to Gill and his likes, such police officers are being prosecuted which is tantamount to persecution (The fact is that it amounts to ridiculing the criminal justice system itself) Which means that the state and its agencies are permitted to deprive people of their lives illegally because terrorism, according to them, cannot be handled in any other way What then is the difference between the state and the terrorist? Furthermore, what happens to the sanctity provided by Article 21 of our Constitution (which states that no person shall be deprived of his life except according to the procedure established by law)?

Among those pleading for immunity for police officers found guilty of "bona fide excesses" and for taking a "magnanimous view", is the Director-General of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), Sankar Sen, who in a recent article writes (he adds that these are his personal views)

> The alleged suicide of Ajit Singh Sandhu is deeply disturbing His tragic end raises a few uncomfortable issues Sandhu was a brave officer He escaped death by a hair's breadth on a number of occasions, was responsible for elimination of some dreaded terrorists The tragic end of such a brave officer under inglorious circumstances calls for serious introspection Now peace has returned to Punjab police officers who have committed wanton acts of violence and illegality are facing prosecutions It is time to consider if a more considerate and magnanimous view can be taken in favour of those who may have committed bona fide excesses The acid test should be whether a person acted bona fide or not

Apart from other unintended contradictions in the article, how does one define "bona fide excess"? Doesn't it sound to be a contradiction in terms? Sen, while pleading "for a more compassionate view", gives the analogy of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa apropos of apartheid, and the Shah Commission These instances do not appear to be relevant in that they did not ask for bending the law nor did they make any appeal to ask for "compassion" The inescapable conclusion of Sen's arguments is that the law should be bent

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IN the context of bending the law, we may refer to a Supreme Court judgment on February 5, 1997 (in a case relating to fake encounters in Manipur brought before the Court by the PUCL in a writ petition)

> It is true that Manipur is a disturbed area, that there appears to be a good amount of terrorist activity affecting public order and, maybe, even security of that State The present case appears to be one where two people alongwith some others were just seized from a hut, taken to a long distance away in a truck and shot there This type of activity cannot certainly be countenanced by the courts even in the case of disturbed areas 'Administrative liquidation' was certainly not a course open to them

In another case relating to 'encounter' deaths in Andhra Pradesh, the NHRC itself observed

> The hardships of the state, in our view, cannot take away or abridge the guarantee under Article 21 of the Constitution or Article 6 of the Covenant (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights), and apply it as a cover against the fundamental right

It may also be noted that even political leaders in Punjab, including the CPI, who are known for their outright anti-Khalistan stand, assert that police officers in Punjab have liquidated not only terrorists and their families but also innocent people

It is hoped that people like Gill will give thought to the question of the rule of law and human rights keeping in mind that our officers and men should not act at the cost of India forfeiting the right to occupy her rightful place in the comity of civilised nations governed by the rule of law The common man and woman expect Sen and the NHRC to devise ways and means to create conditions in which respect for human rights and the rule of law is realisable and in which the law-enforcing agencies will treat the common man and woman—victims of abuses—with "magnanimity" and "compassion" One of the ways to achieve this, as this writer has written on a number of occasions and suggested to police officers in police and administrative academies while lecturing there on human rights and the rule of law, is increasing interaction between social activists and the police This might inculcate in the police a culture conducive to respect for human rights and the rule of law This should be done not by trading charges or suspecting motives mutually, but through discussion of specific instances of violations by the police, like the ones mentioned earlier ■

Out for a Civil War?

I K SHUKLA

Some features of the Bihar shenanigans are extremely disturbing And, not only those involving the Constitution, but also those involving potential ruptures of societal arrangements Too, a question worth asking at this juncture is How much space really is left to the niceties in terms of precedence for civil institutions and initiatives over the imperatives of the ground realities?

It is heartening to see the CBI hauled over the coals by the parliamentarians for its ineptitude or dereliction in requesting the aid of the Army in Bihar as it planned the arrest of Laloo, the chargesheeted CM We learn that the request was not routed through the proper channel This makes the CBI doubly remiss In fact, this sensitivity of the legislators is laudable in terms of our commitment to a viable and enduring democracy

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BUT a closer look at the sequence of events there detracts a bit from the accolades that the law-makers seemed to have been hastily showered with For one, the parliamentary animadversion against the CBI seems to have ignored the totality of the circumstances obtaining in Bihar Second, in view of Parliament's proverbial inertia in regard to matters vitally touching the lives of millions of people, this rush to judgement against the CBI seemed theatrical and cheap The CBI lately has come handy as a whipping boy for reasons less than noble, the loud self-righteousness of protests being more political than principled

How sticklers for constitutional niceties sometimes prefer debating and pontification to putting out a fire threatening to engulf its surroundings, became painfully evident in the case of Bihar held hostage to Laloo's proprietary ploys in corralling it as his estate In the perception other than that of his acolytes, Laloo made his alleged malfeasance look like a medieval knight errant's chivalrous adventure, selfless and Simon-pure If he is not the only one of this epic tribe, his exploits are outstandingly unique and monumentally awesome He has set an example that politicians of his ilk would feel inspired to emulate and exceed That the times are conducive and the theme is quite in vogue make the proposition irresistibly attractive

When the intelligence sources found twentyseven districts of the State hell-bent on an armed confrontation, to put it mildly, and when the local police seemed unwilling or unable to cooperate in the arrest of Laloo, the local branch of the CBI must have found itself stood against the wall This crippling sense of helplessness and inadequacy as a law-enforcing agency was not easy to eschew or override At the spot, and in the exigent circumstances, it had to decide and act fast, and not look beaten and craven, or partial, towards a Bihar baron defiant of decency and civil norms It is not inconceivable that this sense of helplessness was aggravated by Laloo's prolonged defiance of New Delhi's benign importuning to resign, and New Delhi appearing paralysed and weak-kneed Shouldn't such a scenario induce an unnerving depression and lead to desperation, a state directly caused by Laloo's antics over months past which went on becoming truculent and tenacious day by day and hour after sordid hour? The CBI may haven't had time on its side, and perhaps had to decide in a huff Its decision may be termed faulty, but by no stretch of imagination, subversive Would it not be justified to interpret the parliamentary uproar as hair-splitting and a counsel of inaction, a response that would only replicate New Delhi's none too laudable record vis-a-vis a warlord?

Apart from what was or was not feasible, either on the part of the Prime Minister or the CBI, the challenge thrown by Laloo is a sinister pointer Have all its implications been understood and taken into account by the constitutional experts, not necessarily the professional politicos, many of whom haven't covered themselves with glory in regard to either the juridical pieties of the polity or the future of the nation?

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THAT a State was teetering on the brink of a civil war to assert its right to lawlessness, and in the interest of a privileged cabal, is one very dangerous dimension of the casteist cast of modern political onfigurations in India That there are quite a few thers, constitutional and political, that need a close nd serious scrutiny is obvious Also, the fact that he state allowed and suffered this ignominy bodes ll Hasn't the state eroded its legitimacy by appearing omplaisant? Are class-based solidarities covering p the violations? Why did the state appear so elpless in respect of a casteist challenge? Why asn't it shown the same helplessness in the matter f structural challenges in favour of equity for the millions, say, in the matter of rights to land and living wages?

Is it sending a message that its resources are pledged to curb and crush any bid for justice by the downtrodden and the persecuted, and to help monstrosities have a field day as long as they support the class divisions, camouflaged or not by casteist overlays? Too, for whom is the sanctimonious slogan of law and order binding, and for whom just optional? ■

BLUE PENCIL

Double-Think on Vital Tasks

G.S. BHARGAVA

Hypocrisy will be too strong a word for it, perhaps But double-think it undoubtedly is The government is faulted, very rightly, for losing sight of vital nation-building tasks like universal literacy, health care and gender justice but when they are sought to be put on the national agenda the newspapers do not promote the effort The most glaring instance was the observance of the International Literacy Day last week, when both the President and the Prime Minister spoke only about universal literacy and how it is imperative for national development They also reiterated the commitment to make India fully literate in the next eight years, which means making at least fifty million boys and girls learn to read and write by 2005 AD Can there be a more challenging and exciting task than that?

The Prime Minister also made a 'controversial suggestion' on the occasion, which ought to have evoked wider media interest He proposed that students qualifying for senior school certificates should compulsorily make five persons literate "Let us make it a rule," he pleaded He even called it a *dharma* or moral duty to promote literacy That it was newsy even if it were not a policy pronouncement was clear when the BBC news bulletin made it the only item from India While *The Times of India, The Statesman* and *The Pioneer,* among a few others, featured it prominently, the others, notably *The Hindu* and *The Hindustan Times* relegated it to an inconspicuous position on an inside page *The Deccan Herald* put it on page seven but the *Free Press Journal* missed it altogether Keith Flory in *The Statesman* dubbed it 'Gujral doctrine to crucify the student community for the collective failure of the education system' Even then, it highlighted the subject

This failing of most newspapers has been there for decades They have no nose for non-political news For instance, the short-lived Janata Government headed by Morarji Desai had, in 1978, launched a programme for universal literacy for which the active cooperation of the newspapers had been sought As the Principal Information Officer at that time, I appealed to the newspaper editors to devote space in every issue of their publications or as frequently as possible for the topic of universal literacy with the accent on its promotion

The immediate response was lukewarm with some stalwarts contending that 'routine' attention to the topic would make it boring Ultimately, not a single 'national' newspaper came forward to keep universal literacy on its agenda The subject lacked 'sex appeal', as Khushwant Singh said of development news in a different context No wonder, the Supreme Court in its 1993 and 1996 judgements came down like a ton of bricks on the establishment for failing to redeem the promise of fifty years ago Even if the governments since independence are the main culprits, the media as a constituent of the establishment cannot duck responsibility

The proof of the power of the media, including the newspapers, in projecting issues and engaging public attention on them has been most recently demonstrated by the funeral of Princess Diana and the way the British royalty was made to shed its 'tradition' in the matter Why can't the newspapers, in all languages, day in and day out, focus on the plight of the illiterate and also report on the success and failure of the literacy drive? Why not make it a topic to be raised with politicians and Ministers during any and every encouner with them? That is what is meant by putting an issue on the national agenda For instance, in the late 1980s whenever and wherever Rajiv Gandhi met journalists, including the district correspondents, he was confronted with the Bofors issue Mind you, the topic had been drained of news value by then but that did not affect its place on the agenda of the newspapers

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INCIDENTALLY, what is the news in the Prime Minister's statement about keeping open the so-called nuclear option? I asked the chief sub-editors of two 'national' dailies which led with the story for its meaning in concrete terms They had no satisfactory answer Even senior journalists are no more forthcoming in the matter although they wax eloquent on the subject As a *Deccan Herald* editorial put in cogently, it is no more than a reiteration of 'India's known position' even if necessary

Or, for the matter, almost every newspaper from the *Assam Tribune* (Guwahati) to the *Daily Excelsior* (Jammu) has been devoting acres of newsprint to the dispute between the BJP and the BSP on the Speakership of the UP Vidhan Sabha, without making one any wiser in the matter The subject has undoubted political interest but not deserving of the treatment is has got

Understandably, meanwhile, the *Assam Tribune* put the spotlight on the charge of the State's Director-General of Police that Tata Tea by paying for the treatment in Bombay of the cultural secretary of ULFA has financed insurgency in the State It also carried the explanation—it is more an explanation than a refutal of the charge—of the company Among others, only *The Economic Times*, *The Statesman* and *The Hindu* devoted attention to the subject which is undoubtedly of national interest *The Statesman* also defended the arraigned company editorially, saying the disturbed conditions in the State had made it buy peace from the insurgents

The Economic Times editorial pitched it stronger even if in general terms It says that 'a failed State has no right to turn around and accuse the victims of anarchy for yielding to extortion' Admittedly, the tea company did not get the necessary protection for its employees from the State authorities but its claim was that the payment was unintentional with the ULFA activists availing themselves of medical treatment facilities extended to its employees The editorial, on the other hand, makes a virtue of the reported slippage of welfare

Similarly, the formal implication by the Assam Police chief of Ajit Kumar Bhuyan, Editor of *Sadin* and *Asomiya Pratidin*, in the murder of Sanjoy Ghose, a young activist of AVARD-NE (Association for Voluntary Action in Rural Development in the North-East), a non-governmental organisation, has been virtually ignored by the newspapers Besides the *Assam Tribune*, only *The Economic Times* consistently followed the story Bhuyan also heads a local human rights organisation and the charge that his professional and humanitarian activities are a cover for his complicity with insurgents and that he had a part in Ghose's murder while pleading in his newspaper for the victim's release from abduction is indeed grave

Usha Rai has given an extremely informative account of the crime in an article in *Dainik Hindustan* (reproduced in the *Mainstream* issue of September 6, 1997). She has brought out the 'fantastic' coverage of the event by the media in Assam, especially Jorhat, after Sanjoy Ghose had been abducted, although they, too, like the newspapers in the rest of the country did not pay sufficient attention to it earlier. But the tragedy is that the mainstream newspapers have been continuing to ignore both the murder of Ghose and the charge against Ajit Bhuyan

Two other points made by Usha Rai are significant that Sanjoy Ghose had earned the ire of the ULFA by objecting to the diversion of development funds by the contractors to the ULFA coffers and that the threat to his life had been becoming increasingly clear day by day Yet he stayed on at his post of voluntary work Secondly, after his abduction, 'support for his release poured in from all over and some journalists from Guwahati rushed down to Majuli for investigative, field-level reports' Usha Rai is also convinced that Ajit Bhyyan's publications 'are in fact fronts for the ULFA'

But R N Pal, editor of the *PUCL Bulletin*, has a different perspective He does not deny that Bhuyan is a supporter of the ULFA and that his newspaper has been publicising the ULFA activities But he doubts his complicity in Ghose's abduction and murder and avers that Bhuyan's pleas for Ghose's release are genuine and not a mask

Finally, the fittest tribute to Dr S Radhakrishnan on the occasion of Teacher's Day—his birth anniversary—was from D Anjaneyulu in the *Andhra Pradesh Times* He dwelt on Radhkrishnan's 'signal triumph' as a communicator—as well as an interpreter—of the message of the East ■

The Changing Chinese Earth

HARISH CHANDOLA

The train bogie was full of young men and women from Macau going home after travelling in China. On December 20, 1999, their territory, now a colony of Portugal, will return to China, like Hong Kong did in July this year. Born under an alien rule, they were familiarising themselves with the motherland.

In Beijing's Tiananmen Square, Taiwanese flags fly alongwith those of China. It will now be the turn of the Taiwan province to come home.

In Beihai Park, in the never-before-experienced blistering heat of over 40 degrees this year, which knocked several people unconscious on the streets, people ask foreign travellers climbing up to the hill-top pagoda, to rest a while on benches under trees, in the manner of old Chinese concern.

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VISITING China now is easier than India. All you have to do is to go to any of the several China Travel Service offices in Hong Kong, pay the fee and apply for a visa, and buy your plane or train ticket to Beijing or any of the hundreds of open mainland cities. If you fill in your application form in the morning, you get your visa the same day, otherwise the next. There are scores of tours available to these open cities: to Sian in the west, the Great Wall in the north, the economically booming Shanghai in the east and the newly rich Shenzhen in the south, and so on. Take your pick.

There is a visa delay of some days if you are a diplomat, and of more for journalists. These have to be cleared from Beijing.

But it is expensive, from Indian standards. The visa fee is the equivalent of Rs 1050, and a hard-sleeper berth from Hong Kong to Beijing, Rs 4000. The visa allows you a stay of six months.

At the border, the formalities are fewer than in India and clearance faster. Though Hong Kong has returned to China, old formalities remain. At the Hong Kong border your passport is stamped to say you have left it, and then, near Shenzhen, you have to take your baggage out of the train with you and queue up at immigration counters with your passports, on which the entry has to be stamped. Customs may ask you to open your bags, and unless you carry contraband, you go through the barrier like a shot, back to your berth or seat on the same train.

I went from Hong Kong to Guangzhou (Canton) by road. As you come out of the traffic congestion of Hong Kong's New Territories and enter China, you are amazed by the expanse and quality of the six-lane super highway that greets you there. It is well laid out, and smoothly contoured, with not even a small pothole anywhere.

You pay a toll of ten yuan, about Rs 50, at a gate to enter this luxury, and then it is up to you how fast you want to drive, as there are no speed limits marked anywhere, and there is no fear of oncoming traffic, which flows on your left in three separate lanes, across a running metal barrier.

Shenzhen, developed as a competitor and replica of Hong Kong a decade ago, has surpassed it in its skyscrapers and business offices. Everything is sparkling new here, including housing blocks, unlike those turning rusty and grimy in Hong Kong. Hong Kong passes much of its office work to Shenzhen, because wages here are less than a tenth of the former British colony, and thanks to modern communications, data transfer is easier than calling someone from a table next to you.

The southern city of Guangzhou (Canton) was also a big surprise. It has grown enormous, with a forest of billboards everywhere. At night, it turned into a fairyland of multi-coloured pulsating, blinking, beckoning electric lights. The hotel where our vehicle stopped, had a lobby over a hundred metres long, a sparkling mirror-quality red-granite floor, ten metre-high frosted glass chandeliers and shops of very expensive Western brand-name consumer goods. Chinese girls in briefest minis were walking hand-in-hand with well-heeled men, possibly their boyfriends, in nice well-pressed shirts and trousers, some wearing ties and carrying rolled umbrellas, as it was raining outside. But for the faces, one would think it was north Europe.

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THE large railway station was crowded like Old Delhi's but not cluttered and congested, and very clean. Up an escalator, there was a very large waiting hall for foreigners and first class (soft sleeper) travellers A 45 inch TV was playing a rock concert, and some Westerners were sleeping on the velvet sofas lined along its walls A hostess would come and tell you your train was ready to board, and then led you to it

The entire train was air-conditioned The hard-bed sleeper had very comfortable mattresses, and at the foot of them, there were freshly laundered under- and over-sheets, clean blankets, all nicely folded, a pillow and a towel The compartments had six berths, three on each side, with no door to close, as in the soft-bed ones, which had only four berths in them Out, along the corridor, there were jump-seats and small tables next to the large glass picture-windows People unfolded the seats and sat on them, to eat, if they were not going to the dining car, or to look at the passing countryside

It was a year of excessive rain and floods in south China, and everything around was green Low mountains stretched right up to Hubei province, through Guangzhou and Hunan, and the train snaked round them and along the bends of tributaries of the mighty Chang Jiang (Yangtsi) in a kind of a ballet, on red earth, in mist and rain All the old barren slopes had been planted with pines, and young forests were growing everywhere In low hollows stood patches of maize and climbers of gourd vegetable on stakes, sprouting yellow flowers In some rain-fed ponds pink lilies were in bloom, and in others the succulent, tall, wide leaves of taro Not even the smallest patch of land was left unused People grew grain right next to the rail-line

One did not see teams of farmers working together anymore, like before The old cooperatives have been broken up and land distributed among their members, to provide incentive, and free their capacity to earn more from their holdings through hard work The late leader, Deng Xiaoping, had said it was not good for the people "to eat from one bowl" And now each had a bowl, or land, of his own to eat from. About 80 per cent of agricultural land has been redivided, and so in the fields there were individuals tending their own fields No one, however, had more than five hectares

The farmers wore half-pants and T-shirts and their women colourful blouses and skirts or trousers The old common dress of blue close-collar coats, trousers and Mao caps was gone, without leaving a trace Now, on the Great Wall in the north, vendors sold re-starred green Mao caps as souvenirs to tourists

Children with backpacks were going to schools, and a woman, a late-riser perhaps, was brushing her teeth on the steps of her house by a tiny platform where the train did not stop

Village houses were all new, made of red brick with tile-roofs The hand-sculptured old mud houses had also completely vanished, like old uniforms If you kept a sharp eye, you might catch the crumbling walls of one, being eroded by rain The new found prosperity of southern China had now reached its villages also

Unlike in India, no one was defecating along the railway track The attendants, not relying on passengers to follow the notices outside toilets, locked all of them before a train approached a station and then opened them only after it departed and was well on the way Every few hours they would come to wipe the windows and all surfaces of your compartment clean with a damp cloth, empty the trash basket and fill the two large thermos flasks in the compartment with boiling hot water

A black-topped village road ran along the rail-line, from which wide earthern tracks took off at right angles to nearby villages Occasionally a laden truck would trundle along it and some unhurried riders pass by on motorbikes The sea of bicycles that overwhelmed the countryside and towns before, seemed to have dried up, with people taking to motorised transport

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The big city of Hengyang loomed up in the distance, with its tall buildings It is one of the centres of China's chemical industry The loudspeaker in the train corridor which played stringed instruments and sang song since morning, began talking of the approaching city, its ancient past and its recent rapid industrial growth The Chinese are very proud of their cities and introduce them to you in the manner of telling fairy tales, with great love and affection

The produce of the countryside flowed on to the platforms in a controlled manner, and though cheaper than dining car staff, was expensive from Indian standards. A sealed half-litre bottle of water was five yuan (Rs 25), half kilo of lichis ten yuan and ten boiled eggs the same price Big, cooked chicken legs, that could make a meal, were cheap, at five yuan on the platform and ten in the dining car

Plain fertile land began pushing the hills into the background before the train approached the central city of Wuhan Pale-green paddy stood in water on that plain, bisected by the wide Yangtsi, on which loaded long-nosed barges plied A double-decked iron bridge spanned it now Four decades ago, we had to leave the train at Wuchang, cross the river by ferry and then take another train from its other bank at Wuhan. Mao in his year swam across the unbridged river four decades ago, which was celebrated in a popular song sang all over the country, and not quite forgotten even today.

It used to be beastly hot in Wuhan. A popular story said, a man who died in Wuhan found himself in hell, where devils torturing newcomers threw them into a large couldron of boiling oil. They did the same to the fresh arrival, and, to their amazement, found that instead of crying in pain, he began swimming in the oil happily. When queried about his behaviour, he answered: "You just don't know what a relief it is from Wuhan."

Much before this central city, one enters the domain of villages with double-storied houses, some plastered and whitewashed and a few even wearing cream-tiled faces. Cranes were building tall structures in towns, which had beehives of telecommunications disks on them. Baffaloes appeared, tilling square flat fields. Flocks of egrets, or could they be swans, flew in formation over paddies. Yellow raincoated workers were maintaining a rail track. Stacks of brick kilns and industries belching black smoke, came into view.

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NIGHT intervened and covered the changing landscape in darkness. At five in the morning it was already bright when the train arrived at the brand new, cavernous west station of Beijing. Patterned on the Ming palaces in the Forbidden City, it might be the world's largest station in size, with a new wing still under construction. One had to walk a good distance on its spotless platforms to arrive at the taxi ranks, from where a woman driver took us to where we wanted to go, through the wide Chang'an Dajie, much of which ran on flyovers.

We gaped at the new towers that have risen along it in the past few years. But for the Tiananmen Square, and other monuments, it was a brand new city. The old shape had vanished altogether, without leaving a trace. Nothing of the Masherd Hutung (lane), where I lived decades ago, was left. All hutungs and the lovely old houses on either side of them had been razed to yield land for the new skyscrapers.

New internationally known hotel-chains had occupied prime lands and had constructed tall, striking structures. The Peking Hotel had stretched itself and ran for half a kilometre along the avenue. The large yellow M of Macdonalds sat on several new buildings and the wispy haired and bearded doctor smiled from large, luring entrances of Kentucky Fried Chicken eating places, Signs of discos, like Agogo, Jamhouse, CD Cafe, etc., appeared. A nearby lane was lined with pubs in a row, beginning with the Hidden Tree, Nashville and the well-known Minder Cafe, and you could meet the best Chinese rock singer, Jiang Tian Su, having a drink in one of them, with his bodyguard. If you were specially lucky, you might even see the famous director, Jiang Yi Mo, who won the Gold Medal at the 1996 Delhi Film Festival for his *Shanghai Direct* film, there.

Brand new BMWs, Mercedes, Citroens, Chrysler jeepwagons, Farraris, floated past. These and many other well-known automobiles, costing a packet were now all assembled or manufactured in China.

Expensive Japanese and Western shopping arcades and restaurants lined up its avenues. The 224,000 square metre Beijing Modern Shopping City with its two basements and 11 floors of shops, department stores, restaurants, gymnasia and entertainment centres was crammed full of exquisite luxury Western and Chinese goods, and the Shuang'an Shopping paradise sold 100,000 kind of quality articles on its five floors, served by eight escalators and nine lifts. Several other equally large and elegant shopping cities had come up, like the Lady Shopping Mall, to meet the luxury needs of women, and then there were the equally fabulous Chang'an Store, the Xidan Shopping Centre, the Wumei Shopping Mall, the Di'anmen Department Store, The Cheng Xiang Trading Centre, the Yuanlong Silk Corporation, the Chongwemen Food Market, the Quan Jude Duck Group of restaurants, which served a large variety of duck-delicacies, and many others. New golf courses and entertainment centres were being built.

The capital city with its 11 million people was spread over a vast distance, bridged by an underground rail network, over 6000 taxis of various kinds with different fare structures and long buses. There were no scooters or three-wheelers.

In the west, some 30 kilometres from the centre, where Beijing University sprawls, a long row of tall chinar (plane) trees was being chopped down to widen an avenue in Zhong Guang Cun, near the new Third Ring Road around the city.

Talking about foreign food and retail goods outlets in the country, I asked a party functionary if these were not taking out a lot of Chinese wealth? "We calculated the money they take out and also what these and others brought in, found that what was brought in was much more than what they took out, and came to the conclusion that it was profitable for the country to have them," he said.

Who used all the luxury stuff?—I asked Deng

Xiaoping, he said, had explained that socialism did not mean poverty for all, and had arrived at a policy to let some people become rich, so that others may indirectly benefit from their wealth That was what had happened The vast majority, however, was still at hand-to-mouth level, but some had become rich, and others were trying to emulate them

I met a youth in a publishing house working on a salary of 350 yuan a month (Rs 1750) after graduation from Beijing University But his sister had been picked up by a Japanese company, which paid her a starting salary of 5000 yuan (Rs 25,000) She had just bought a car From next year a tuition fee would be charged by universities, and the "iron rice bowl" (assured government jobs with poor pay) would be gone One would have to search a job oneself, in government or the expanding private sector, and there would be no guaranteed employment

Industries were coming up rapidly and the direct foreign investment in China was of an order some $150 billion a year, while in India it was not even $ 3 billion This was because China had invested hugely in infrastructure This year alone, it received $ 2 81 billion in loans from the World Bank for the development of infrastructure and fighting poverty, and since 1981, when it joined the Bank, it had obtained $ 28 12 billion, much of it earmarked for infrastructure projects

Unlike India, China generated plenty of power and investors did not have to worry about power cuts resulting in loss of production Super highways spanned its industrial centres, resulting in speedy flow of goods and rail network had been enlarged to prevent delays in goods movement Red-tape in sanctioning investments had become practically non-existent and even Indian companies had come to invest and make money here The country was confident, not afraid of foreign capital coming in to rob it It was time we learnt from China Instead of sending our development experts to the well-advanced West to learn ways of progress, it was time we sent them to China, whose situation was similar to ours in seeking foreign capital and expertise, but which had succeeded enormously in doing that ■

BOOK REVIEW

Demystifying the Nation and Nationalism

IRFAN AHMAD

Nationalism Without a Nation in India by G Aloysius, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1997, xii + 265 pages, Price Rs 395

Unlike society on the other side of the Atlantic, the entangled Indian reality defies the old adage of time being a great healer The complex experiences of Indian society rather prove otherwise Here memory swallows time The past is thus alive and enmeshed in the unpleasant irony of the present which in turn shapes contours of the future Problems, apparently old and so-distant, therefore, keep surfacing though in different forms and with the new agenda of making and unmaking Nationalism, its definition and the place of various groups and communities therein are such problems

Aloysius in his insightful and thought-provoking book *Nationalism Without a Nation in India* seeks to unsettle the commonplace, dominant assumptions about nationalism and instead casts a fresh look on the entire range of issues But it is not so easy Because nationalism has till very recently been the exclusive domain of either political scientists or historians Sociologists have largely been pre-occupied with tribal, village or caste studies The endeavour to offer a sociological account of nationalism and modern history is thus commendable as it adds to the scanty corpus of sociological knowledge on it, if any More so, because his vantage point is those downtrodden Dalits whose voice still go unheard—nay hushed, and whose leaders are at the drop of a hat dubbed as anti-national by the likes of Arun Shouries Ambedkar was a lackey of the British rulers, argues Shourie[1] But what about those founders of the Indian National Congress who without any qualms hailed British rule as 'benign'?

Aloysius precisely poses this and other intriguing questions vis-a-vis the discourse on nationalism and its articulation, monopolisation by the traditionally empowered elites This he does by taking a journey through the pre-colonial period of history and situating the emergence of contesting social forces on the political horizon of India To begin with, he questions the common academic wisdom accepted by almost all the social scientists. They are as follows the Indian National Congress was the only nationalist party/movement, that none but it alone carried the struggle against British rule, that it truly championed the aspirations of all groups and all communities, and by logical extension any group/person opposed to either the ideology or policies of the Congress was anti-national Bipan Chandra is a representative of this consensual wisdom But wisdom, like tastes and values, are anchored in the social milieu and conditioned by the forces of history

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THE new emerging wisdom, itself a product of the changing scenario, is thus opposed to the old one. The task is thus two-fold—demolishing the established but incorrect propositions and advancing a new interpretation As part of the former, Aloysius rejects nationalism as wresting of power from the British to the native, on two counts, First, the notion of power is not confined to the legal-political terrain It has a rather much larger social base Second, while this kind of formulation of nationalism talks of wresting power from the alien to the natives, it does not address the crucial question of its equal distribution within the natives The Dalits under the dynamic leadership of Ambedkar were raising exactly the same question but the Congress dubbed Ambedkar as anti-national For Aloysius, this framework of analysing history is simply incorrect and hence full of ideological undercurrents Instead, he argues, following E Gellner, that a nation emerges only when power and culture congrue together Seen in this perspective, the social awakening from below, that long preceded the establishment of the Congress in 1885, really sowed the seeds of a nation-in-the-making as it stood against the ascriptive bondage and called for democratisation of power within the civil society He writes

> The rise of political consciousness in colonial India has largely been traced to the associations of upper castes, urban segments of population and the subsequent emergence of the Indian National Congress This understanding is based on a very narrow view of politics and is rooted in a certain ideology The identification of the use of political consciousness with the emergence of the Indian National Congress, serves the purpose of legitimising the Congress movement in national-political terms vis-a-vis other forms of consciousness and struggles that are termed social-communal (p 53)

At the turn of the nineteenth century thus two kinds of awakenings, conflicting yet intertwined, made their appearance One talked of transference of power from one culture to another Whereas the other stood for the democratisation of power within the culture While one stood for the revivalist, monolithic, ascriptive and status-quoist society, the other visualised a social order based on equality, non-Brahminic protest traditions and change Aloysius' basic contention relates to why the regressive, hierarchical and ascriptive awakening became nationalist and the transformatory, egalitarian communal-casteist

It leads him to a penetrating analysis of social configuration before and during the colonial era and the conflicting thought patterns that resulted following the interface between Indian society and the cultural and administrative structure or British rule He traces the 'nationalist' awakening right from the *bhadralok*-sponsored renaissance in Bengal. Though this criticism is not novel,[2] it assumed significance in the backdrop of his overall critique of nationalist consciousness vis-a-vis the Dalit awakening According to him, the entire reform movement or the so-called national renewal was nothing but strident reassertion of the Brahminical order which later on became the core of nationalism Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, B G Tilak, B C Pal, M K Gandhi—all symbolised it, albeit in varying degrees and with differing intensity In spirit it had three dimensions—Vedic Brahmin, pan-Indian territorial extent and opposition to the West and modernity

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As against this, the non-Brahmin, Dalit consciousness not only charted out an altogether different path but systematically withstood the homogenising onslaught of the Brahminic ideology It, therefore, did not take the 'voyage of nostalgia' Neither did it invoke the mythical glorious past Instead, it went to the real happenings and the lived experiences that characterise the Dalit consciousness Narayan Guru, an Izhava, ridiculed the idea of intermediaries and talked of direct communion with the Almighty He preached monotheism and equality of all men In today's Andhra Pradesh, Y P Veerabrahman and his disciple, Siddappa, opposed social slavery imposed and legitimised by Brahminism As early as 1852, Jyotiba Phuley began a movement of awareness among the non-Brahmin castes against the enslaving letters of Brahminism He campaigned for education among the Malis and other Maratha lower castes He was probably the first thinker-reformer of his kind to advocate women's education In central

India, the consciousness among the Chamars grew and they transformed themselves into Satnamis Satnamis later on became a sect led by Ghasi Das (1756-1836) who opposed Brahminism and gave the message of brotherhood and equality Balak Das, his son, was later murdered by the caste Hindus for wearing the sacred thread The Punjab province saw the founding of Adi-Dharma, a non-Brahminic sect, by Mangoo Ram in 1925 It was in open clash with the Congress and Gandhi And the Gangetic belt reverberated with the fiery speeches of Swami Achchuta Nand who championed the cause of those who were treated like creatures by the twice-born And, of course, the tearing criticism of Hinduism by Ambedkar, who always remained a thorn in the flesh of the Congress He rightly said

> These several streams of pro-equality social forces from different parts of the land, during the 1920s, made concerted efforts to hold conferences and consultations among themselves, in order to project a minimum acceptable programme of power homogenisation within culture through the formation of a number of federations They were sponsored by Ambedkar, Srinivasan, Ram, Swami Achchuta Nand and others who became not merely spokespersons of their respective caste-clusters, but leaders with an alternative vision of the future national society (p 69)

Though these twin streams of consciousness were already present much before 1885, the Congress-led national movement always glorified the one propounded and practised by the traditional, ascriptive elites and vilified the other that arose from below with a crying democratic urge The marginalisation, rather rejection, of the latter, argues Aloysius on the basis of Gellner's framework, prevented the birth of a genuine nation though nationalism became a rallying cry As against Gellner's congruence between culture and power what was sought to be maintained throughout the national movement was the disjunction between the two and hence no nation This automatically raises a fundamental question who stalled the birth of the nation? To Aloysius, it was the Congress, both as a party and a movement, which remained in the clutches of the Brahmins and whose interest it always advanced to the exclusion of Dalits and Muslims And nobody in the Congress did it so successfully than Gandhi

> Gandhian nationalism, premised on unchanging truth, is a nationalism without social change, perhaps even anti-social change, and hence against the nationalism of the masses Transition within society, or the emergence of a new society in history is an anti-nationalist project, according to this view of nationalism Such is the contradiction of Gandhian nationalism (p 212)

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GANDHIAN contradiction is now a historical fact So is the contradiction of the national movement at large But Aloysius himself is no exception While his attempt at exploding the myths about nation and nationalism is welcome, there seems to be a mismatch between his interpretative paradigm and the reality of the Indian society Anchored as it is in Gellners's framework outside the Indian society and conditioned by the events of the European enclave, Aloysius' endeavour is akin to fitting realities—uncomfortable and selective—into a borrowed thought This is for two reasons First, unlike Europe, in India the national and the state do not coincide In fact, there exists many nations under one state[3] Secondly, in a culturally plural society like ours, the congruence of culture and power thesis far from revealing facts, conceals them Which culture is the book exploring? Is there any single culture in India? Probably by culture Aloysius means the equality of opportunities in legal terms and removal of ascriptive disabilities by a modern-national code If so, it goes unexplained

There is also an absence of theoretical cohesion and rigour As it suits to him, he selectively picks up insights from different sources, mostly conflicting Assemblage of insights from E Gellner, Foucault, R Guha and Antonio Gramsci in one theoretical kit makes the otherwise scholarly work abysmally weak in rigour and analytical strength One also gets a feeling of valourising the anti-Brahminist traditions uncritically and ignoring the chasm within This is borne out by at least the current experiences in UP and Maharashtra Why is it that the Dalit consciousness today instead of charting an autonomous path is gradually but surely surrendering to the Brahminic ideology, an enemy it fought against in the past? Is there an exclusive anti-Brahmin culture? Are not the two permeable at times?[4] As for the cleavages within, the author simply ignores them For example, the arena of contest for Ambedkar and Periyar was different While the former eventually took refuge in the lap of tradition, the latter all through his life stood for modernity And no debate about nation and nationalism could be thorough without modernity

Caste-centric explanation alongwith a visible disdain to Marxist approach is another vital shortcoming of the book While, it is true that the caste system and nationalism cannot be understood just through the base-superstructure methodology, it is equally true that it cannot be reduced to the culturological fiat The book would have been much more insightful had it taken the caste-class continuum rather than caste-class dichotomy as the desideratum of sociological exploration If A R Desai's prediction about the dissolution of caste following industrialisation has failed, the L Dumon-type explanation has also been unable to grasp the aetiology of its persistence Ambedkar himself was for an approach of continuum He, therefore, attacked not only Brahminism but also the social-material base (Baniya) which sustains and strengths the former

But Aloysius has only begun his academic journey This is his first book in English He is imaginative and bold And hopefully in his march from intellectual exploration to the destination there will be contemplative stops ■

NOTES & REFERENCES

1 Shouri, A (1997), *Worshipping False Gods*, ASA, Delhi
2 Much has been written about the critique of reform movements See, for example, Sen, A (1994) "Bangal ka Punarjagaran, Ek Punarvichar", *Samkalin Janmat*, May 1-15, pp 9-13
3 Interview with T K Oommen Ooomen's framework based on plurality of traditions and culture stands in sharp opposition to Gellner's linear, Euro-centric paradigm
4 Aloysius dichotomised categories of Brahmin culture and anti-Brahmin culture is derived from Gellner's binary concepts of High Islam and Low Islam For a critique of Gellner see Zubaida, S (1995), "Is there a Muslim Society? E Gellner's Sociology of Islam", *Economy and Society*, Vol 24, No 2, pp 151-88

COMMUNICATION

The Spanish Left

The Spanish Socialists, who lost power some months ago, have been hoping that a Supreme Court ruling would clear their leader, Felipe Gonzalez, once and for all of direct involvement in the "dirty war" against Basque separatist guerrillas in the mid-1980s and give the Left something to cheer about No such luck First, the court embarrassed Gonzalez when its judges decided by only six votes to four not to have him formally questioned Then the Attorney-General stressed that he could be summoned if, as seems to happen with alarming regularity, fresh evidence were to emerge

Suspicion will linger that Gonzalez at least knew more than he has admitted about the "anti-terrorist group", generally known by its acronym GAL, which killed some 28 suspected Basque separatists in the 1980s An Interior Minister under Gonzalez, Jose Barrionuevo, has been formally charged with setting GAL up

No less worrying for the Spanish Left, in the longer term, is the growing feeling that in Opposition, after nearly 14 years in office, it does not know where it is going It does not seem much at ease with Gonzalez But no alternative leader is in sight

Gonzalez seems determined to stay on After the general election in March 1996 a few brave Socialists dared suggest he might go Gonzalez, after all, had led the party since 1974 and as the Prime Minister since 1982 But, though he thought of standing down before the election, he believed the result, which was closer than expected, vindicated his decision to stay on The critics fell silent Party bigwigs argue bizarrely that, yes, the party needs change, but that the man to enforce it is, yes, Gonzalez

True, he remains a skilful operator He it was who steered the Socialists to the middle ground and emasculated the old Left He benefits from Spain's traditional susceptibility to caudillismo, the rule of strongmen in politics Felipe alone, sigh his admirers, has charisma A lot of pensioners and poor types would agree One recent opinion poll put him back ahead of the Conservative Prime Minister, Jose Maria Aznar But many young and middle-class people are disenchanted, not just with the party's policies but also with its tired and tainted image They might warm to the party if it had a new leader But who?

Josep Borrell, an American-educated Catalan who was the Public Works Minister, might like a shot at the job A self-made man with a gift of the gab, he is not especially liked, either on the Right of the party or by his fellow Catalans Joaquin Almunia, the party's parliamentary spokesman, could be a compromise leader—but is too loyal to Gonzalez even to consider seeking the post Alfredo Perez Rubalcaba, another loyalist, might also hold the party together The NATO Secretary-General, Javier Solana, might conceivably be lured back from Brussels But there is a whiff of the Gonzalez era about all these people They do not smell of change Yet there are simply no younger Socialists coming through

Some say the United Left, made up mainly of old Communists, which got 11 per cent in the election, should team up with the Socialists, who got 38 per cent But rapprochement is far away One bit of the United Left which recently split off is close in spirit to the Socialists but too small to matter The rest of the party is in the grip of another entrenched boss, Julio Anguita, but he and Gonzalez detest each other Forget a broad Left alliance so long as the old leader stays on The Supreme Court may have given a lease of political life to Gonzalez—but not, it seems, to the Spanish Left

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CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS (SEPTEMBER 7-13, 1997)

NATIONAL

September 7 ➢ Assam Director-General of Police K Hrishi Keshan accuses Tata Tea of funding personal expenses of top ULFA militants He says Tata Tea recently paid the hotel and hospital bills in Mumbai beside air fare of the hardcore ULFA cadre, Pranati Deka, wife of Chitraban Hazarika, the ULFA finance secretary, based in Bhutan or Bangladesh

➢ Leader of the Shiv Sena in Rajya Sabha Satish Pradhan says "We do not require the ladder of the *Sangh Parivar* to become a national party but have an all India appeal due to the bold stand on the very concept articulated by Mr Bal Thackeray"

September 8 ➢ Prime Minister I K Gujral, addressing the two-day international seminar on "The Role of Nuclear Energy for Sustainable Development" organised in New Delhi by the Department of Atomic Energy, says India can make nuclear weapons and would retain the nuclear option to meet unforeseen circumstances He criticises foreign powers for trying to prevent India from developing nuclear technology in spite of India's peaceful track record

➢ UP Chief Minister Ms Mayawati says at a public meeting in Varanasi that there would be "a change of Speaker along with a change of Chief Minister on September 21" BJP Vice-President Kushabhau Thakre, however, tells *The Asian Age* "A written agreement was signed by the two parties We will go by the agreement, word by word, ruling out a change of the Speaker"

➢ Punjab Police chief Puran Chand Dogra tells the press that jailed militants receive funds regularly sent by Bhai Amrik Singh Fund and Guru Amar Das trust active in the USA and Europe since 1993 through personal couriers, *hawala* channels and even through mailed cheques

➢ Prime Minister Gujral, addressing the 31st anniversary celebrations of the International Literacy Day in New Delhi, opines "The students of class 12 should be issued certificates only after they produce a certificate saying they have taught five people"

September 9 ➢ Special Judge (Ayodhya cases) Lucknow J P Srivastava holds Shiv Sena leader Bal Thackeray, BJP President L K Advani, former BJP President Murli Manohar Joshi, BJP Vice-President Vijaya Raje Scindia, former UP Chief Minister Kalyan Singh, Vishwa Hindu Parishad President Hari Dalmia and 43 others including the then District Magistrate and the SSP of Faizabad *prima facie* guilty for trial for entering into a criminal conspiracy to promote enmity between groups on religious grounds, injuring or defiling a place of worship, insulting a religion, inducing public mischief, some of them for dacoity, causing hurt to public servants and deliberate dereliction of duty and giving misinformation The case originated with 49 FIRs, out of which only two related to the demolition of the Babri mosque and the rest to attack on media persons including foreign correspondents, and the subsequent CBI investigations The accused are ordered to be present in the court on October 17 when the charges will be formally pronounced

➢ Tamil Manila Congress leader G K Moopanar and his party members—Union Ministers of State Ms Jayanti Natarajan and Peter Alphonse—resign from the Rajya Sabha making infructuos a Shiv Sena petition for disqualifying them under the Anti-Defection Law

➢ Sitaram Kesri on his first visit to Bihar after becoming the Congress President, tells a Congress workers' convention in Patna "The coalition government will not last I don't have faith in it" In his last days he wants to see the Congress back in power "which is not a distant dream"

September 10 ➢ Congress President Sitaram Kesri, talking to reporters in Patna, defends Bihar Chief Minister Ms Rabri Devi and hints at the possible election alliance with Rashtriya Janata Dal, saying the Congress has made alliances in the past with progressive organisations in Bihar

➢ Senior BJP leader Atal Behari Vajpayee says that Ram Janmabhoomi would be the election slogan of his party if cases against the leaders persisted

➢ Chairman of the Janata Dal Parliamentary Board Ram Vilas Paswan rules out alliance with the Bahujan Samaj Party saying it has "made the Dalits a saleable commodity It used them as a bargaining tool to grab power"

September 11 ➢ Union Government signs an agreement with the unions of its Group C and D employees conceding most of their demands for improvement in the pay package and taking upon itself an additional burden of Rs 5000 crores for the current financial year Following the settlement, the Joint Consultative Machinery (JCM), which had called for a countrywide indefinite strike from September 24, has withdrawn the strike call

➢ Supreme Court restraints the Patna High Court from seeking the Centre's explanation to probe into the Army help by the CBI to arrest former CM Laloo Prasad Yadav

September 12 ➢ Delhi High Court directs PV Narasimha Rao and 18 others to face trial in the Rs 3 5 crore Jharkhand Mukti Morcha bribery case Justice Jaspal Singh in his 114-page verdict deals with the various aspects of corruption, the role of the investigating agency and the survival of Rao's government vis-a-vis the July 1993 no-confidence motion with JMM help

➢ India and Pakistan announce that the third round of Foreign Secretary-level talks between the two countries will be held from September 15 to 18

September 13 ➢ Mother Teresa is laid to rest by a grieving India in a unique state funeral The VVIPs who attend the funeral include among others Ms Hillary Clinton, Sheikh Hasina, Madame Aliane, Sonia Gandhi *et al*

➢ Chief Minister Mayawati, on the eve of her six-month rule, decides to transfer important portfolios such as energy, excise, industrial development and forest, which she had held so far, to four BSP Ministers

INTERNATIONAL

September 7 ➢ Speaking in Lahore on the occasion of the Pakistan Defence Day to mark the 1965 Indo-Pak War, Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif says it is an established fact that Pakistan possesses nuclear capability and the debate must end now "Whatever we have is our right as a sovereign nation," he adds

➢ British Prime Minister expresses the hope that the IRA chief Gerry Adams, entering the talks on the future of Northern Ireland, "is prepared to forsake the bullet and gun and abide by the verdict of the ballot box and democracy"

➢ President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, King Hussein of Jordan and President Yasser Arafat of the Palestine Authority call, after a summit in Cairo, upon Israel to refrain from policies alien to the "spirit of peace" and to implement "the interim agreement in all its clauses"

September 8 ➢ Former dictator of Congo Mobutu, 66, dies of cancer in exile in a Rabat (Morocco) hospital four months after rebels ended his three decades rule of corruption and plunder of the country's resources

➢ In a statement issued in London, the Mahajir Qaumi Movement based in Karachi says the objective of the recently passed Anti-Terrorists Act of the Pakistan Government, is to involve the MQM, a coalition partner in the Nawaz Sharif Government, in the "alleged unlawful activities"

➢ Philippines President Fidel Ramos addresess the nation by radio and promises elections in 1998 as scheduled But he fails to deny the rumour that he would seek an unconstitutional second term

September 9 ➢ London daily *The Independent*, quoting British arms dealer Peter Bleach, reports that the British intelligence agencies had given the go-ahead to the 1995 Purulia arms drop in order to find out who was behind the deal

➢ South African President Nelson Mandela, after his meeting with East Timor Bishop Carlos Belo, tells a news conference in Johannesburg, he had told Indonesian President Suharto that East Timor, a Portuguese colony annexed by Indonesia in 1976, should be autonomous

➢ Tamil rebels of Sri Lanka attack and set ablaze *MV Cordiality*, a 60,000 ton cargo ship anchored off the northeastern coast of Sri Lanka and owned by the China Ocean Shipping Company of Hong Kong Five of the 32 crew members are feared dead

➢ Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher warns that the Labour Government's plan to give Scotland a separate Parliament risks the break-up of the United Kingdom

➢ South Africa's White-led National Party chooses its youngest ever leader, Van Schalkwik, 37, a strident critic of the African National Congress (ANC), to replace FW de Klerk who announced his retirement from politics two weeks ago

September 10 ➢ Dr Hussain Mashayeki of the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran says Iran is ready to buy a research reactor from India even now provided New Delhi guarantees it will fulfil its commitment unlike last time when it withdrew its offer to build a multi-purpose research reactor just before agreeing on the financial terms

➢ Talking to the Associated Press of Pakistan, Foreign Secretary Shamsad Ahmed says Pakistan will make up its mind for the next round of Foreign Secretary-level talks only after receiving certain explanations from India

➢ A Pakistani military court sentences senior Pakistani journalist Humayun Fur, Bureau Chief of the Urdu Peshawar daily *Mashriq* to five years rigorous imprisionment on charges of passing state secrets to 'a foreign diplomatic mission" The Government of Pakistan asks two non-diplomatic staffers of the Indian High Commission to leave the country as they had been "handlers" meeting Humayun Fur frequently

➢ US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, on her arrival in Jerusalem, tells Israeli "We are with you in your insistence that the Palestinian Authority fulfil the responsibilities and obligations it has undertaken"

September 11 ➢ M P Koirala, 85, the first commoner Prime Minister of Nepal (1951-54), leader of the struggle against the oppressive hereditary rule of the Ranas, who had first joined Mahatma Gandhi's Civil Disobedience Movement and was jailed in India where he spent long years in exile till 1951, dies of heart failure in Kathmandu

➢ Scotland goes to poll to decide whether Scots want autonomy which will allow London to keep Defence, Foreign Affairs, Economy and Social Security, while the proposed 129-member Assembly will legislate over areas like Health, Education, Justice and Culture If the vote is "yes" the House of Common would draw up a legislation early next year and elections for the Assembly will be held in May 1999

➢ Seraiki Qaumi Movement leader Bibi Shahida Naz files a constitutional petition in Peshawar High Court praying that several members of the Pakistan National Assembly and the Speaker be disqualified for passing a resolution condoling the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, who led an immoral life and also to declare the impugned resolution as uncostitutional and subversive of Islamic ideology

September 12 ➢ Scots vote in a three-to-one landslide in favour of a Labour Government plan to give their country its own Parliament after nearly 300 years of rule from London

➢ Fifteenth Congress of the Communist Party of China opens in Beijing with the report of the General Secretary, Jiang Zemin Invoking the spirit of Dang Xiaoping, the pioneer of China's economic reforms, Zemin says "We are building socialism in a down-to-earth manner so that it is full of vigour and flourishing in China"

September 13 ➢ US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright says at Alexandria that she told President Hosni Mubarak of America's resolve to work with Egypt and other friendly states to remain vigilant while also responding to opportunities to reducing tension She proceeds to Saudi Arabia, the next stop on her debut regional tour

➢ Former cricketer and chief of Tehreek-e-Insaf Party of Pakistan Imran Khan, speaking at a meeting in Peshawar on the occasion of a member of Provincial Legislative Assembly joining his party, launches a scathing attack on Nawaz Sharif and charges him with efforts to establish monarchy in Pakistan

➢ Cambodian King Norodom Sihanouk rejects an appeal from his son, former First Prime Minister Prince Norodom Ranariddh, to lead the country's delegation to the UN General Assembly, saying he would not rescind the letter already-signed assigning the new First PM Ung Huot and powerful Second PM Hun Sen to the UN ■

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Edited and published by Sumit Chakravartty *for* Perspective Publications Private Ltd, 1E/12, "Sewak House" (First Floor),
Jhandewalan Extension, New Delhi-110055 Tel 7516763, 7516893 *Printed at* New Delhi Printers, 20/7 Old Market,
West Patel Nagar, New Delhi-110008 *Editor* Sumit Chakravartty *Editorial Adviser* Nikhil Chakravartty
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VOL XXXV No 42 September 27,1997 Rs 7

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POLITICAL NOTEBOOK

The Unfinished Agenda

Fortified by his Finance Minister, as Prime Minister Gujral seems to be earning kudos abroad from his hosts in the Western world, it is important that he should without delay ook to the state of affairs at home. It does not follow that the stability of his government is assured just because the country has demonstrated that it has a lot of staying power.

The manner in which Big Money has corroded the body politic could be seen from the fact that a former Secretary to the then Prime Minister has warned that Mumbai might be going the Chicago way if one were to take into account the misdoings of the underworld as revealed recently. It is indeed a matter of utmost concern that the premier commercial centre of the country should be under the control of the gangsters of the underworld. Bollywood which has so long been boosted as the eldorado where beauty and gold go hand in hand, is now found to be under the terrifying control of armed mafia operating with the knowledge and connivance of a good section of the police and the law-enforcing machinery.

At the other end of this far-flung country, it is clear that the Central Government is at its wit's end, not being clear as to what is to be done. The Government has hardly come out with flying colours in its encounter with the Tata Tea and other plantation giants, since the favouring of the ULFA had virtually become the unwritten edict of the previous Saikia Government. Will it behove the Prime Minister to repudiate the Saikia regime or to take action against the teagarden magnates? The manner in which it has so far handled the Bodo insurgency leaves a lot to be done. Above all, there has been no over-all policy perspective with regard to the entire north-eastern region. The time has come when there could be no further tinkering with the seven States of the region, as each one of them is bristling with internal problems and dissensions which can no longer be held together by patch-work repairs.

The United Front government claims to be secular, but could hardly prevent the accession to office in the very State where the Babri Masjid demolition was perpetrated five years ago without any serious approach on the part of the Centre to rectify the situation. It is not a question of the new Ministry under the BJP leadership which should be politically attacked when the United Front in power has hardly done anything to win over the BSP from its opportunist rampage with each and every party that it finds available in different States. There is nothing to show that the BSP would be regarded as outcast just because it has had a working alliance with the BJP in UP. To talk loudly of secularism and at the same time accept as bed-fellows the very same elements which have no compunction to align with those who are being branded as communalist is the height of cynicism which the present establishment promises without any regret.

Next door in Bihar, Prime Minister Gujral is known to be preferring Laloo Yadav's band to those opposed to his corruption. It is no secret that Prime Minister Gujral has had to take recourse to such a strategy for the sake of ensuring the support for himself and his government. The corrupt image of the Laloo ministry does not seem to touch the Centre. If Laloo is in prison today it is because of the uproar raised by his critics not only inside the United Front but outside as well fed up with his corruption and misrule. There has been no action from the Centre to take any action whatsoever. With Laloo on his shoulders, Prime Minister Gujral can hardly be expected to fight corruption.

Meanwhile, caste conflicts go on in an uninhibited manner. The number of violent incidents in Bihar in which the upper castes and the so-called backwards came into conflict in recent months far exceeds all that has happened before. The government at the Centre can hardly keep its eyes shut and bury its own face in the sands. Nearer home, caste violence has come in all its ugly nakedness as near as Ghaziabad without any move — official or political — to put a stop to it. And once the casteist mafia is emboldened there could be no way of stopping it in its bloody trail. It is amazing that the government at the Centre claiming to be secular has been so benumbed today that nothing seems to move it. Meanwhile, discontent has been spreading with some of the Ministers at the Centre turning totally irresponsible.

It is good to hear the Prime Minister declaring in New York that "the future of India lies in the equitable distribution of wealth." Back home, the burden of the new-model economic reforms that his Finance Ministry has been carrying out has been bringing about precisely the opposite. The so-called liberalisation policy which depends very largely on the market, has widened the gap between the rich and the poor. We have today in our country a whole brood of the super-rich at one end and the vast multitude of those who are below the poverty line. The economic policy that the Gujral Government has so far introduced is bound to widen the gap, making a mockery of the Prime Minister's claim that it would ensure "the equitable distribution of wealth" in our society. If the upper set in the economic hierarchy is fattened it does not by any reason ensure the equitable distribution.

September 24, *N C*

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INDIA, PAKISTAN AND SAARC

Changing the Context of the "Core Dispute"

KARAN R SAWHNY

In recent months, both the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan have given the impression that they place regional cooperation at the top or near the top of their agendas. In this they have been backed by other leaders of the SAARC

At the Male Summit the region's Heads of State and Government finally agreed to make politics a part of their regional consultations The dispute over Kashmir was probably at the back of the mind of Sri Lankan President Chandrika Kumaratunga when she said

> we, the neighbours of those two great countries, hope and pray that in the months ahead the two nations will succeed in forging good-neighbourly relations Their success will surely be ours

Two decades ago, the father of the European Community Jean Monnet observed that

> people only accept change when they are faced with necessity and only recognise necessity when a crisis is upon them

In India and Pakistan, the confrontation over Kashmir is the prime cause of high levels of military spending The realisation that fiscal and balance of payments crises are the results of excessive military spending, has undoubtedly provided the context for rethinking security priorities in Pakistan In India the sense that it needs the support of its neighbours in order that the entire region may wield more influence in the global system, provides the impetus behind new thinking This we now call "The Gujral Doctrine", but we could even call it the Salman Haider Doctrine because he implemented it and equally we could name it after a whole host of Indian leaders and intellectuals because there is a widespread and strong lobby in India and its parliament which seeks good relations with Pakistan and our other neighbours

The fruit of this new thinking will be harvested, however, only when peaceful resolution of conflicts forms the basis of the Indo-Pakistani relationship Every thinking South Asian has come to understand that the real threats to their societies come from internal conflicts and particularly ethnic and sectarian conflicts, and not from outside Many nation-states have reduced defence expenditure and now enjoy dividends of peace Unless South Asia follows this global trend and deploys resources to productive sectors the internal conflicts which now disrupt every aspect of our daily life will only worsen

Both Indian and Pakistani leaders understand that military conflicts are not acceptable to public opinion in their countries India wishes to end the adversarial relationship For this to happen, leaders, as well as all those who are able to mould public opinion need to understand that their audience is not just their own voter but those on the other side who must be wooed

The author is Director, International Centre for Peace Initiatives, New Delhi This is the excerpt from an address delivered by him at the conference "Towards a Progressive South Asian Economic Union" in Karachi on August 18, 1997)

The antagonistic nationalisms of the two states are not likely to soften for some time and a negotiated settlement on Kashmir, acceptable to all sides, is difficult to achieve in the foreseeable future However, if we are able to leave aside the question of who owns Kashmir, a *modus vivendi* based on transcending issues relating to the sovereignty and juridical status of the erstwhile princely state offers the best hope of ending our confrontation All that the average Indian and Pakistani want is the possibility of spending a holiday in the Valley away from the summer heat It is possible, much sooner than most people realise, for such an option to be available The most potent of all the strategic instruments we could design to turn this into reality would be one which would end violence The SAARC is such an instrument A SAARCised Pakistan and India would not have to think of each other as enemies It is only when we are able to give the same consideration to core areas of cooperation both in the political and in the material realms as we give to our core areas of dispute, will we be able to move forward

That the SAARC already exists is our great good fortune In order to make it more effective, we have to think again about the nature of our relationship but on the basis of "togetherness", forbearance and mutual respect which were so vital in the creation of ASEAN It is then that we will be able to help each other in our times of difficulty Whether it is Food Security Reserves or an Open Skies Policy or special arrangements for financing trade and promoting foreign investment in the SAARC region as a whole, goodwill as well as political will are required to realise our potential and provide a better life for our peoples

There are four capacities we must build so that we may take appropriate action to build a climate of cooperation Since there can be no instant solution to our problems we must strengthen the muscles that give us patience The processes—social, economic, political, psychological—which will erode the sharp edges of our antagonisms and suspicions will take time to come to fruition The capacity for patience will be vital for us to get over differences

The second capacity we need to develop is the one for balance In the words of Pakistan's Human Development Centre Report, India needs to make a choice whether it wants one more tank or wishes to immunise four million infants The opportunity cost of buying one advanced French Mirage Aircraft in Pakistan is primary education for a whole year for three million children In almost every aspect of our effort to design and then implement a policy framework for economic cooperation in South Asia, the strengthening of our capacity for balance will be vital

The third capacity we need to create is the capacity for dedication to reality The SAARC cannot move forward unless India and Pakistan develop a reasonable working relationship with each other Once this is achieved our economic ties could include technology transfer and technical cooperation in a number of fields where we could learn from each other But all this requires a sense of reality and a dedication to understanding it

And finally we need to take responsibility for ourselves For fifty years we have pursued a strategy of confrontation with each other and imposed crushing burdens on our peoples We are still following the same strategies knowing full well that nothing was gained from such strategies in the past We reached such a state that we needed outsiders to bail us out When our countries take responsibility for themselves, they will pursue strategies where the gains are obvious and assured for all their peoples When we have built a peaceful and prosperous South Asia, we will owe a great debt to all those pioneers, who took the responsibility to develop a long-range vision of South Asia and made strenuous efforts, against the odds, to break the barriers between us ■

"Reform" of the United Nations–I

SUBHASH CHANDRA SARKER

The author is a veteran journalist and writer This article was written before the opening of the current session of UN General Assembly where reforms are being discussed We are publishing in this issue the first part of the two-part article

On July 16, 1997, Kofi Annan, the Secretary- General of the United Nations, presented with a lot of fanfare proposals "for the most extensive and far-reaching reform of the United Nations since it was founded 52 years ago", as the Secretary-General himself described the proposals He pledged a "quiet revolution in the United Nations" in time for the twentyfirst century The speech was televised "live" over the BBC, CNN and other channels The "bold" (the term used by Annan himself) proposal is completely silent on the most contentious issue of the system of reforming the veto system in voting which arbitrarily gives the right to only five nations out of the membership of 185 singly to stall even the unanimous decision of the other members Fifty nations signed the Charter of the United Nations on June 26, 1945—when the Second World War was still ravaging Asia—and ratified on October 24 of the same year after the War ended with the unconditional surrender by Japan on August 14, 1945 Among the original members of the UN was India, though not a sovereign nation but a British colony, and did not include the Axis powers—Germany, Italy and Japan—defeated in the War and included other countries in Africa, Asia and Australasia

The Secretary-General in that speech dealt with the other main problem facing the organisation in the 52nd year of its existence—widespread non-fulfilment of the financial obligations, the worst offender being the Government of the United States of America As in the wider economic field, in the United Nations also the USA is the largest debtor The non-payment of its dues has virtually paralysed the United Nations

How does Kofi Annan, who himself is a UN bureaucrat of long standing and picked up by the US Government in preference to Boutros Boutros Ghali, the retiring Secretary-General of the UN, who was virtually the unanimous choice of the other member-nations, propose the solution of the problem? He has, of course, to pay lip-service to the need for recovering the arrears due from the defaulting members (whom he carefully avoids to name)

He said

> I want to end the persistent state of near-bankruptcy in which the organisation has been living for far too long Too many Member-States are failing to discharge their treaty obligation to pay in full, on time and without preconditions

Out of 185 members only 75 had paid up till July 16 1973, said the Secretary-General (*UN Newsletter*, New Delhi, July 26, 1997, p 2)

Bureaucracy

ANNAN's main thrust is to make the UN more bureaucrati (his suggestion for the creation of the post of Deputy Secretary-General) and the abridgement of the rights o the states to voice their feelings from the forum of th UN (through his proposal to curtail the duration of th session of the General Assembly to "give the UN Secretaria greater flexibility" without indicating how the duratio of the Assembly affects the "flexibility" of the Secretariat The UN Secretariat was set up to facilitate in work o the General Assembly Now it wants to smother th General Assembly itself

As if he is not having enough of bureaucratic strength he recommends

> Member-states consider establishing a commission to stud the need for fundamental change in the system at specialise agencies which are essential members of the United Nation family

Why could not this task be left to the newly- create Deputy Secretary-General, of course, remains unstated

He proposes "a no growth budget" by "cutting o documentation" which will reduce the use of paper b 30 per cent, the cost saving is not indicated The reductio of the number of posts by 1000—a welcome measure—but there will be nearly 30,000 posts still, far too many one should feel considering the quality and range of their activity On the other hand the documents of United Nations alone can be counted among the principal achievements of the UN and it is here the proposal for cuts has been made This will no doubt serve the purpose of the United States which has for a long time been talking of the need to contain "wasteful expenditure", to cover up its own delinquency in not paying up its dues

Unrealistic High Salary Structure

THE singlemost source of profligacy lies in the highly inflated salary structure of the United Nations which has no relation to the condition or level of salaries of equivalent people in most countries of the world A world body ought to spend money according to the level of income of its majority members The Indian Government's officials who are seconded to the United Nations get a salary there which is many times more than what they receive here So there is great reluctance on the part of the officials to come back Even when they return they are immeasurably richer than those who are working in India The UN posting is coveted by the bureaucrats and treated as a privilege to be granted to the favoured few A new inequality is created in which the honest and really efficient officials have to suffer Sometime an Indian official of the UN is called upon to work in India, retaining his UN payscale which is liable to be highly disruptive

Domination of US and allies over Key UN Posts

IT is pertinent to mention that at the end of fifty years, out of 2600 professional-level posts in the United Nations 554 per cent of the posts were occupied by Americans, Europeans, Japanese, Australians and New Zealanders, that is, by developed world—and only 446 per cent of the posts by persons from developing countries (*South Centre For a Strong and Democratic United Nations A South Perspective on UN Reform*, p 112) Of course this number does not give a full picture of the actual strength of the staff of the United Nations Besides this professional staff of 2600, there were 21,263 persons as general-service staff who were local recruits without prescription of nationality, 900 persons as translators and others appointed by the Secretary-General A quarter century after decoloni-sation was virtually completed

> The North (i e , rich countries) with a minority of member-states and of world population, still has more nationals of UN posts that are supposed to be subject to geographical distribution than the great majority of the world's member-states and world population in the South (poor countries) "(*ibid*, p 112)

Twenty countries of the North occupy 60 per cent of the total of extrabudgetary posts not subject to geographical distribution (*Ibid*) In 1992 the UN employed 31,127 persons (*Ibid*)

The salary structure of the UN should be changed immediately to bring it at par with that of countries like the People's Republic of China and India The national governments of those countries, which have a higher scale of pay, should pay the balance (the difference between the UN salary and their own salary) to their nationals deputed to serve the United Nations so that no one should suffer from loss of income for working with the UN But the urgent need is to bring down the unrealistically high salaries of the UN to the realistic level obtaining in a majority of the member-nations

In a way the governments of some rich countries are already augmenting the UN salary of their own nationals because even the unrealistically high salary scales of the UN fall below the salary scales of the other international agencies of the developed countries by about 24 per cent and 50 per cent lower and also lower by about 35 per cent than those in the IMF and the World Bank (*For a Strong and Democratic United Nations A South Perspective on UN Reform*, South Centre, Geneva, 1996, p 52)

Location of Headquarters

THE need for the reduction in the salary scales of the UN would probably make it necessary to shift the location of the UN office from the highly expensive New York and Geneva to a less expensive country and location The League of Nations was headquartered in Geneva to signify the European domination of the world When the UN was set up the logical course was to locate the headquarters of the new organisation in Geneva But Europe lay prostrate after the Second World war and the US gained unrivalled ascendancy and New York became the headquarters of the United Nations Asia and Africa were still virtual colonies and any country there was out of consideration on that ground as the UN's headquarters

China by virtue of its size, population and alliance with the USA and Britain in the Second World War, and the Soviet Union could not be kept out of the UN and was also accorded the right of veto India, which was still united at the time of formation of the UN, would perhaps have also been accorded an equal footing with China and have been accorded the right to veto, had it been politically independent So, very much a British Colony which India was at that time the US and other countries were unwilling to accord India an overriding vote (Veto) with permanent seat in the Security Council It was viewed that according such a position to India would artificially boost the British authority as, in those days, India was bound to vote as the British government wanted it to vote If India had acquired the veto right then she would still possess that right, as after the Partition of India in 1947 India remained a member of the UN, while Pakistan had to get membership through a fresh application (as indeed Bangladesh had to do after

Readers please note

Mainstream **editor, Sumit Chakravartty, is covering Prime Minister Gujral's current tour abroad His first dispatch will appear in our issue dated October 4, 1997**

the partition of Pakistan in 1971) Lack of political independence cost the Indians dearly

High Printing Cost in US

ANOTHER source of inflated expenditure of the UN is the highly expensive printing costs in which tremendous economy can be obtained if the printing is done in developing countries rather than in the US and highly expensive West European countries and their satellite countries elsewhere That will develop the printing industry in the developing countries The lip-service the UN now gives for the industrialisation in developing countries will have some meaning

Arrears

THE member-nations had failed to pay up their subscription As on January 31, 1995, the arrears of unpaid subscription totalled $ 3600 million of which just 5 countries accounted for as much as $ 2500 million and other member-nations $ 1100 million (*For a Strong and Democratic United Nations A South Perspective of UN Reform* South Centre, Geneva, 1996, p 75) It is clear that the financial crisis is engineered by the rich members, primarily the USA, which owed $ 1070 million, Russia $ 649 million, Japan $ 334 million, France $ 221 million and Ukraine $ 207 million (*Ibid*, p 74) These five countries had an outstanding dues of $2,481 million in 1995 Although there has been default year after year there has been no penalty for the defaulting members, in clear violation of Article 19 of the UN Charter which clearly lays down that "a member (which) is in arrears in the payment of its financial contributions to the organisation shall have no vote in the General Assembly if the amount of arrears equals or exceeds the amount of contribution due from it for preceding two years" (*Ibid* p 67)

Organisational Reforms

BEFORE discussing organisational reforms, it will be instructive to have a brief look at the experience of The League of Nations—the organisation created after the First World War (1914-1918)—designed to maintain world peace The basic inspiration for such an organisation was very much a US idea, propounded by the country's President of the time, Mr Woodrow Wilson, who personally took part in the Paris Peace Conference at which the League of Nations formally came into being (January 12, 1919) The League was based on the last of the famous 14 points of President Wilson, propounded in December 1916 in his Peace Note, which was duly accepted by the Anglo-French combine and their allies in their war against Germany and its allies It proposed "a general associations of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike" (Quoted in *The League of Nations in Theory and Practice* by C K Webster and Sydney Herbert, *London, George Allen and Unwin Ltd*, *1933*, P 33 Also see *International Relations Since the Peace Treaties* by E H Carr, London, Macmillan & Co Ltd ,, 1937, pp 268-274 for extracts from the *Covenant of the League of Nations*)

The Council was to be the executive wing of the League of Nations It was initially envisaged to consist of nine members—five permanent members, the "great powers" of the time, UK, France, Italy, the USA and Japan, and four nations elected by the Assembly of the member-states—the first ones so elected, were Brazil, Spain, Greece and Belgium who were to retire after a specific period (See Carr, *op cit*, p 99)

The League suffered a major blow by the refusal of the USA to ratify in Charter, effectively quitting the League almost at its founding In quick succession Brazil withdrew from the League in 1926, Japan in 1933, and Italy in 1937 Russia after the October Revolution in 1917 did not become a member of the League of Nations until 1934 to quit in 1939 Turkey became a member from 1932, Germany from 1926 to leave in 1933 The League could never become a generally acceptable organisation to all the states at the same time The Covenant listed fortyfive countries—sixteen European, twenty American, six Asian, two Australasian and one African (Racist South Africa) The domination of European and American countries over the League was fully secure After additions and withdrawals 27 or nearly half of the total number of 57 member-states remained European (See p 62 Webster and Herbert *op cit*) Europe was described as the 'Kernel of League" (*op cit*, Carr p 102)

A European Agent

THE First World War marked the rise of the USA as the major international power, more so financially But at the same time the outcome of the War strengthened the hold of the imperialist Britain and France and European colonialism in general with the exception of German imperialism and Russian imperialism The small number six from Asia and virtually none from the Africa continent except the racist South Africa highlighted this domination of European imperialists India, although a colony, was among the six Asian countries, underlining the dominating role of Britain, which as then ruling over India The League's affairs were dominated by Britain for all practical purposes

The League of Nations followed the principle of unanimity among all members for any decision to be effective (See *C K Webster and Sydney Herbert, The League of Nations in Theory and Practice*, London 1933, *op cit* p 49) For various reasons the League was not able to stop the aggression of Japan (which attacked and occupied Manchuria (now Liaoning) province of China in 1931, Italian attack and occupation of Abyssinia (now known as Ethiopia) in 1935 and Germany's unilateral repudiation of international treaty obligations and reoccupation of Rhineland in March 1936 German seizure and occupation of Austria (March 1938) and quickly followed by the occupation of Czechoslovakia (March 1939) went unchecked This encouraged Germany to mount an attack on Poland on September 1, 1939 to invade Poland This time Britain and France responded by declaring war against Germany on September 3, 1939 The Second World War began which was to last up to August 14, 1945 The League of Nations was nowhere in the scene It was formally dissolved in April 1946, handing over its remaining activities to the newly-formed United Nations Organisation

(To be continued)

Teachers and Quality of School Education

J S. RAJPUT

One of the major issues before the nation, in the 50th year of Independence, is that of universalising elementary education We have nearly as many children in elementary schools and an equal number of children outside schools No nation can afford such a situation at this juncture of history It is often stated that at the present rate of growth of elementary education, it may take several decades to provide even five years education to all the children Realising the gravity of this situation, the National Policy on Education 1986, fixed certain targets for achieving universalisation of elementary education These had to be re-written when the Policy on Education was revised in 1992. India is a signatory to the World Declaration of Education For All adopted in Jomtien in 1990, targeting achievement of UEE by the year 2000 In our hearts, we know that even for the most incorrigible optimist, the achievement of such a target would be a miracle Success in this area has been achieved in countries which gave top priority to education, particularly, universal elementary education It can also be achieved in India, provided the planners, the training institutions and teachers approach the issue with a sense of total commitment, dedication and confidence in achieving the target

At the outset, it must be considered that the group of 'out of school' children is a 'difficult' one These are children from remote and farflung areas, involved in child labour, assisting families in looking after the siblings, not getting enough support from parents and also suffering deprivations of various kinds including economic constraints Strategies of opening more schools, appointing more teachers or providing some nominal incentives, though essential, may not necessarily bring forth the desired results Bringing these children to education and schools would demand creation of basic minimum facilities and an attractive environment in learning centres and schools as a pre-requisite However, it would require much more than this A mission approach to universalisation of elementary education was envisaged in the National Policy on Education, 1986 Towards this, committed groups of individuals and communities could contribute visibly and effectively

Prof Rajput is the Chairman, National Council for Teacher Education

There are several innovative experiences that have been gained over the years in certain select pockets where community response and participation has changed the entire scenario of elementary education In China, the success of universalisation of elementary education was achieved because the community accepted the challenge and supplemented and complemented the facilities provided by the establishment through community financing and by providing expertise and assistance from the community In India, on the contrary, the major drawback at present is the general belief amongst the masses that only the establishment or the government is responsible for providing basic education The decentralisation of authority and responsibility through Panchayati Raj Act could be an effective tool to adopt the correct strategy by involving community and handing over the responsibility of providing basic education to all children of the community It should be a very encouraging sign at the implementation stage This approach if concretised, without any dilution at the implementation stage, could certainly provide encouraging results

Teachers for Universal Elementary Education

Any survey of the existing situation in schools in a particular cluster, specially, in rural and remote area, generally presents a very dismal picture and reveals lack of infrastructure in the schools, non-availability of teachers in terms of regularity and punctuality, lack of teaching-learning materials and inadequate professional preparedness of the teachers often emerge as disquieting factors Efforts to improve upon this scenario in the past have resulted only in peripheral changes A matter of serious concern should be the level of motivation on the part of teachers which unfortunately has declined gradually because of several factors No nation which intends to achieve universalisation of elementary education for such large numbers can achieve so without trusting their teachers and providing them with basic minimum facilities of infrastructural as well as professional support to discharge their functions The respect and regard due to them as real builders of future society has to be ensured by both the community as well as the establishment

While preparing teachers the training institutions are mostly following an uniform approach based upon the nationally evolved pattern Though it is modified at the level of state governments, universities or concerned boards of education for elementary and secondary stages, the approach essentially remains the same The actual situations in which the majority of teachers work in schools are very different from those under which they are trained A teacher of universal elementary education working in a rural, remote or child-labour prone area faces an entirely different set of issues and problems as compared to his/her counterpart working in a well-provided school in which the teacher may not be primarily concerned with the enrolment issues and retention requirements The very purpose of training teacher needs to be re-examined and made responsive to both the immediate needs as well as long-term requirements Bringing every child to school, retaining them and ensuring adequate learning shall remain the primary tasks before the teachers during the next ten years, to say the least

Who become school teachers

PROFESSIONALS globally agree that the initial years of schooling require maximum preparation of those who become teachers at this stage It has been an irony of situation that the place of honour and dignity which should be given to the teachers of elementary stage and pre-school stage has never been granted to them by the existing system of school education in our country The hierarchy amongst teachers is just the reverse of what should be expected on academic and professional considerations As a result, one rarely opts to become a primary school teacher if other avenues are available Most of those who come to this profession do so as a last recourse This tendency extends to teachers of secondary as well as higher secondary stages Sufficient efforts have not been made in the past to consider incentives and opportunities for brilliant young people to get attracted to teaching professions in schools This does not imply that there are no committed, creative, intelligent and devoted individuals working in schools In fact, one of the most encouraging aspects of school education in India is the fact that working amongst serious situations of deprivations and deficiencies, our teachers are able to impart education and instruction which could be compared to those working elsewhere in better and affluent situations However, in the context of elementary education, it is the totality of target group along with the quality and relevance which matters most Not a single child can be left unattended The nation cannot afford even a small group of teachers who are not fully prepared professionally and committed individually to undertake the responsibility

There are more than 1200 elementary teacher training institutions and more than 600 secondary teacher training institutions including university departments of education in India During the last decade, large number of these have been assisted by the Government of India and at present, there are 429 District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) supposed to be district level resource centres for teachers in all aspects of elementary education In addition, there are 33 Institutes of Advances Studies in Education (IASEs) and 73 upgraded Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs) which have also been assisted generously by the Government of India in terms of equipment, research grants, support for buildings and faculty positions Had these institutions become operational at the optimal level, the entire scenario of school education would have changed in terms of quality and relevance Unfortunately, this has not been the case because of several handicaps This initiative from the Government of India, however, provides a network of well-equipped institutions which need to be staffed appropriately and provided support to conduct the programme and activities envisaged in the original conceptualisation towards "overhauling the teacher education system" which was very clearly stated in the National Policy on Education 1986 and 1992 We need to review our recruitment policies to these institutions, provide opportunity to brilliant young persons and also make provisions for attracting those who have the experience of innovative practices in school education because of their association with voluntary organisations and other agencies Most of these institutions deserve support on two major aspects—availability of qualified and committed staff and the availability of programme funds with the Heads of Institutions within reasonable time In addition, the institutional autonomy would also go a long way in achieving the targets

Education and Poverty Alleviation

IN India, poverty is a stark reality Unemployment is another ferocious reality lurking large before young persons Education must respond to these situations The relevance of curricula at post-primary and secondary stage of school education has been the matter of concern, particularly in the context of its utility, relevance, acquisition of skills and development of attitudes These are also major issues before open education systems and vocationalisation of education Education is supposed to play an acultu-rating role It prepares individuals for life It also prepares them for economic activities and productivity In simple terms it aims at producing young men and women who apart from being good persons are also capable, competent and skilled

Attitudes of teachers can be changed only if they themselves remain associated with work and productivity The skills that teachers acquire while teaching disciplines like science, mathematics, etc, can all be used to develop an ethos oriented towards indigenous culture and dignity of work The implications of such an approach could be far reaching Teacher training programmes need to be regularly updated and upgraded These must respond to the fact that education as such may not necessarily serve the purpose unless and until 'what kind of education' is fully analysed and responded to by teachers and hence by teacher education

District Resource Units (DRUs) are extension units of District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) These have also been approved for some voluntary agencies It is expected that the DRUs shall arrange common programmes ensuring participation of both the community and the school Such initiatives alone could lead to an intense school community relationship Unfortunately, at this stage, school community interaction is confined only to utilising community resources for the school There is no vice-versa Unless and until the school proves its utility to the community the relationship between the two shall remain a myth Teacher shall have to bridge the gap between the two

We expect our teachers to devote full time to teaching If they are encouraged to participate in production activities in their own forms, fields or other areas, the impact could be positive also This would require intense discussions, preparedness and change of attitude and approaches Serious thought is being given to the fact as to whether the teacher should do only teaching and nothing else If a local teacher is appointed why should he/she not be encouraged to work in the farm or fields? If this is permissible, the possibility of its utilisation for education by the teacher would be seriously considered Work camps during vacations could be organised by the teachers providing children both leisure and production activity during this period Each of these issues has considerable implications for teacher preparation and also towards developing a curriculum framework for teacher education

Teacher Education Programmes

THE National Advisory Committee set up by the Government of India "To Advise on Improving the Quality of Learning While Reducing the Burden on School Students", popularly known as Yashpal Committee, has analysed the teacher education aspect also It has elaborated the need of constructing a new self-image of the teacher It goes to elaborate "past attempts to improve teacher training programmes and institutions have met with rather limited success By and large, teacher training continues to be isolated from mainstream academic areas related to education Inservice training too in most of the places, has assumed the character of a ritual devoid of academic substance or the capacity to stimulate" Presently the teacher training programmes being conducted at elementary and secondary stage are of two-year and one-year duration respectively In several states, even the elementary teacher training programmes are of only one-year duration Effectively it gets reduced to 6-8 months because of well-known provisions of delayed admissions and other factors This is certainly not a sufficient duration to prepare professionals who will have the necessary competencies, commitments and performance levels There have been multifarious demands from concerned educationists and educators that the totality of teacher education programmes needs to be looked into Yashpal Committee has also highlighted this aspect

Administrative and legal provisions need to be applied ruthlessly to teacher training programmes running as commercial success stories Similarly, there is a need to examine existing policies with regard to nursery teacher training courses and institutions Indeed, what is required is a review of the overall training policy which permits the traditional bifurcation of degree programmes from non-degree programmes, and their application to different stages of school education The National Council for Teacher Education which has recently been given the statutory status has, in a period of less than two years, been able to persuade universities not to conduct teacher education programmes with an eye on generating resources for other areas One of the mandates given to NCTE in its Act is 'to take all necessary steps to prevent commercialisation of teacher education' It is an indicator of serious maladies existing in the system because of which such a function has to be identified in profession which is supposed to be noblest amongst all

Some of the steps which could contribute to the universalisation of elementary education as well as the quality improvement could be identified without much difficulty Those joining teacher training institutions need to go through an aptitude test and their suitability to become teachers needs to be examined thoroughly The training institutions themselves require upgradation and assistance in terms of infrastructural support as well as professional inputs This is more important for those institutions which have not come within the category of DIETs, CTEs and IASEs No programme of teacher training should be conducted until and unless the institution concerned has acquired all the necessary professional expertise to do so Different models of teacher training programme are a growing need in view of the diversities that exist in our country

Transforming Teacher Education Programme

THE quality of teacher education programmes results into far-reaching implications in preparing manpower not only in the area of education but also in specialised technical, scientific and management areas In fact, it is the key to overall development of the cognitive capital of any nation and becomes critical in case of developing nations It is an irony that practically every teacher educator feels dissatisfied with the existing programmes of teacher education at pre-service stage as well as at inservice stage Such a situation must lead to formulation and visualisation of new models of teacher preparation strategies, unfortunately, this has not been the case The structure, design and duration of teacher education programmes needs a very critical review in view of advances in various subject disciplines which are directly linked to teacher education programmes. A large number of teacher educators believe that education as a discipline has grown considerably during the last couple of decades The focus on new technologies, and media and the consequential impact of globalisation on classroom necessitate additional inputs in teacher preparation programmes The issue of developing skills for life-long learning can no longer be ignored Development of certain specific skills is not sufficient unless and until the teacher training has acquired the major skill of refining the skills already learnt and also inculcating a capacity to learn new skills and competencies without any reservations and hesitations

The major challenge before the teacher education system is to ensure its own regeneration and revitalisation It has to ensure that it responds to culture specific, region specific and change specific requirements and is futuristic in its content and transition The programme should *ipso facto* enhance the efficacy of the system and convert the institutions into activity based partnership oriented and enjoyable teaching learning situations The social context and orientation towards individual needs must become prominent ingredients of such programmes At present master level teacher education programmes are supposed to prepare curriculum developers, teacher educators, evaluation experts, researchers, all in one, through one-year M Ed programme which has an effective duration of 5-6 months only It needs to be reviewed critically whether such a situation is really relevant at this stage There is need to develop sufficient research, database on which, the nature, structure, duration and content of teacher education programmes can be built Same would be applicable to the inservice education programmes which at this stage have become routinised and are conducted generally on models developed 3-4 decades ago These are more oriented towards the resource persons or trainers and their preparedness than towards the needs of the serving teachers The trend will have to be reversed and such a reversal is possible only through regular inbuilt surveys, assessments and studies within the system itself

The futuristic teacher education programmes can no longer be confined to the well-established areas of teacher preparation These will have to identify the components for the broadening the scope of the field of activities for teachers The practical components in teacher education programmes should invariably play the dominant part in intensive interactions with classroom situations, school activities, management of school systems These are critical ingredients of teacher preparation programmes The community context was very seriously emphasised more than two decades ago It was a very clear and well-developed task However, at the implementation stage, it has remained far below the initial expectations The experience of the last two decades should provide us as an insight into the reasons for inadequate implementation and implementation of this vital recommendation The future strategy should not repeat the same mistakes Hence the need for

(Continued on page 22)

Teachers Perspective on Reforming Higher Education in India

The following is an Interim Report (prepared in September 1997) of the Jawaharlal Nehru University Teachers' Association on the Rastogi Committee's recommendations on changes in the structure of higher education in the country

I. Preamble

In *this fiftieth year of independence, the academic community in India faces a serious challenge, namely, of putting its house in order* The Rastogi Committee Report is before the community and has suggested various changes in the structure of higher education in India It was set up to recommended the salary structure for academics, but has dwelt little on this aspect and far more on suggesting what it thinks would make the academic community 'perform better' These are mostly in the nature of bureaucratic controls Perceptive thinkers have been suggesting that such controls (and other features) have precisely been the cause of the problems in the institutions of higher education

Ten years back, in 1987, when the Mehrotra Committee Report was presented to the community, there was a reaction to it on similar grounds Now, in retrospect, that report looks more acceptable than the present one The implication is that there is a regression from one report to the next

The community rejected the Mehrotra Committee Report in 1987 and launched a furious agitation but in the end the report was accepted with minor compromises This time too, the academic community would protest and reject the report but may be forced to accept a compromise within the parameters set out in the Rastogi Committee Report

To make progress in the matter and to check further deterioration in the system of higher education, *it is essential that the community take the lead and suggest what it thinks is the appropriate framework* On August 12, 1997, when the teachers all over the country observed a one-day strike to protest the suggestions in the Rastogi Committee Report it was suggested that there is a need to work out an alternative

JNUTA has taken a lead in the matter to generate a debate which may then lead to the evolution of an alternative A committee was set up for this purpose The committee met several times and received suggestions from the JNU community

On the basis of these consultations and discussions, *this interim report is prepared for wider dissemination and debate* A final report may be attempted in a couple of months, after responses are received from the teaching community

We request all those interested in evolving an alternative and concerned at the deterioration in higher education, to *send in their comments on this interim report and any other suggestions, to JNUTA* We also request other teachers' organisations and individuals to generate a debate on this report and related aspects in their areas

In this fiftieth year of independence, let us not miss the opportunity to introspect on the deficiencies of our system of higher education, so vital for the country *One needs to reflect on the independence movement which generated a vitality in the nation in spite of the very adverse circumstances* It clearly brings out the importance of creating democratic structures for promoting creativity and leadership In spite of the very low levels of education at all levels and the disruptions caused due to the protest movements in which teachers and students participated in large numbers, the nation produced leadership and excellence on large scale Today we look like pygmies in front of those who accomplished much with little resources The proper institutional framework and the commitment it generates are crucial and need to be revived for reform of higher education

II Framework of the Alternative

Higher Education in India faces a whole range of problems today Many of them have been listed in the Rastogi Committee Report but some have been either left out or formulated in a framework which is limited and inappropriate to the analysis of that problem Typically, this forces the community to debate these issues in that limited perspective and therefore into accepting compromises which amount to partial solutions

However, the obvious limitations of the Rastogi Committee should not be used as an excuse to ignore those problems which may show the academic community and the institutions in a not so good light *We need to be confident in pinpointing the problems (independent of the omissions and commissions of Rastogi Committee), their causes and the possible solutions*

The debate in the wider community is bound to be set in the context of the Rastogi Community and we need to address the issues raised therein without accepting the limitations That is, not be limited by its parameters The recommendations of the Rastogi Committee have already been analysed and voiced by DUTA and JNUTA These concerns have been addressed here and interpreted in the context of the wider understanding of our profession that emerges here in this exercise

In arriving at the alternative proposed here, several options which are currently being debated by the community were considered *That considered the most appropriate to the structures and needs of higher education and to our society is presented* The consequences resulting from the other options have been briefly spelt out in the relevant places

For instance, currently, expenditure per science student doing a Ph D in JNU may be of the order of Rs 55,000 and for an IIT B Tech student Rs 1 lakh If the government decides to privatise higher education or makes students pay full costs, then the above-mentioned amounts would be of the order of the annual fees, assuming that no profit is earned This would be about 5 and 9 times the per capita income in the country and would roughly rule out more than 95% of the population from entering these courses Even if loans are provided this would not materially change the situation Similarly, for Masters degrees in Sciences, 90% of the population would be excluded

Enrolment in these subjects would get limited Whether that is desirable or not is a separate issue and should not be confused with the implication that *privatisation would force reservation by money as opposed to caste, etc* Is this what we want? A desirable mix of public and private funding may be worked out so that choices can be exercised

We need to be clear why subsidies to Education in general and to Higher Education in particular need to be given? We also need to spell out the extent of subsidy that we would like to be given and justify it from a social point of view

India is a poor country Resources have many alternative uses, but specially in the context of the grinding poverty (when even the essentials of a civilised life are not available to the bulk of the population) the choices have to be carefully exercised It is in this wider context that the issue of resource use in education needs to be justified *Salary levels and availability of infrastructure to academics has to be situated in this context* If we ignore this, we would be on par with other sections of society in obtaining what we can coerce out of the state This is perhaps a reality but there is a need to situate our position in a broader perspective

This need not mean that we undercut our position vis-a-vis other sections of the population who do not use such considerations in their demands *The relative wage argument is important in this context since higher education needs to attract and retain talent* We thus need to formulate the issue of salary structures both in absolute and relative terms While the per capita income (and poverty) would dictate the former the latter would be based on the requirement of skills and training in different comparable jobs Consequently, as long as the absolute levels are not fixed on the basis suggested above, parity with other jobs would dictate salaries This is only an illustrative example of the kinds of alternatives that need to be discussed and evolved which would be consistent with the long-term demands of society and the immediate needs of teachers' struggles

III Dynamic and Static View

SOLUTIONS to the problems facing higher education are urgently needed if the nation is to make rapid progress and face the challenge of globalisation The solutions may be sought either within the present (existing) framework or outside it in the wider context

Typically, arguments are limited to the context of the present structures Man's basic nature is assumed to be to shirk work unless given an incentive The role of internal motivation (specially in the field of higher education) is denied The model chosen is that of the bureaucracy or factory work which is mechanical, repetitive and often boring, requiring little creativity Productivity is measured in terms of some numerical output like hours spent in office and papers written (files pushed) or based on an index of some composite features Such yardsticks are also sought to be imposed on higher education ignoring the intangible elements, like, quality of work and originality Non-quantifiable aspects, like, frustration affecting motivation and originality are ignored

When the essential character of work in higher education is denied and defined in other terms, the solutions also get distorted A bureaucratic view of control of higher education emerges, a hierarchy becomes essential to control the non-performing academics It becomes necessary to structure salaries so that they produce an incentive to harder work Given the importance of the hierarchy and bureaucracy to this line of thinking, academics fall in a lower rung than the bureaucrats and so do their salaries

In the alternative, if it is the belief that *the growing bureaucratisation and its control over higher education is precisely the cause of its decline* then one would need to think outside the parameters of the present debate

Debate on higher education has often faced the problem that suggestions are made within the present framework We need to break out of this morass since in an alternative structure the behaviour of individuals would also alter If the present system is to be reformed, then the assumptions underlying it have to be changed otherwise the crisis can only deepen Such suggestions (and importantly, those being suggested as alternatives) need to be evaluated both in their totality and from outside the system That is thinking dynamically

IV. State and Higher Education

CURRENTLY education in India is heavily supported by the state in various ways Most academics want this to continue It is important to analyse the relationship between the two The desirability of the link (and its nature) between the state and higher education needs to be probed and enunicated

One view may be that state would like to keep higher education under control to serve its purposes—of the class controlling the state This is a conspiracy theory which has large elements of truth but perhaps not the whole truth Under this theory, *autonomy of the system of higher education is necessary to limit this control to serve a larger interest of the nation—of all the classes* A subsidised higher education by definition will be dependent on the state and under its thumb But funding by the private sector will be even more under the thumb of the class interests since this would not be mediated by the pressures other interests can exert on the state

However, autonomy of higher education can also be thought of as in the interest of the state as it is structured. *Society has to reproduce itself at a higher and higher level, specially in today's competitive, rapidly changing and uncertain world* New challenges are emerging with a breath-taking rapidity and are proving to be difficult to cope with both for society as a whole and for the sectional interests

These are in the areas of Science and Technology as well as in the social fields One need only mention in this context, WTO, international division of labour (and technology), emerging information order and its social impact, global environmental concerns, etc It is hard enough for a nation like India to simply cope with these challenges what to talk of attaining leadership position in the world A dynamic higher education system is the only hope of coping with such issues, and, therefore, it is in the interest of the presently formed state *But there can be no dynamism without autonomy and minimum state controls This is not an attempt to suggest a free for all, accountability to society is important*

We know so little about how knowledge at the frontiers is systematically generated? At the least, it needs freedom of thought unfettered by bureaucracies and pre-conceived ideas To advance knowledge, it is necessary that there be centres in society which can put forward critiques of the existing, regardless of considerations of power and money It is imperative to look beyond the constraints of those in power or whose interests are linked to money The world has become so complex that no one or simple solution may work so that there is need to explore various options This requires unfettered thinking

It is in this sense that teaching is vastly different in character from other fields of endeavour and has different requirements than them This should be our point of departure for a debate on the vexed issues of autonomy and accountability

While accountability refers to issues concerning the links between the wider society and higher education, the issue of autonomy deals with the separation between the two structures It must also address issues relevant to the internal structures within higher education The autonomy of functioning of the individual within the system of higher education is critical The service conditions, etc, should not emasculate and demoralise the individual

V. Autonomy

HIGHER education is an amalgam of teaching and research with synergy both ways Ideally, institutions catering to this are places of academic pursuit—generators of ideas and analysis and driven by academic rationale While they should have the freedom to pursue ideas, they should be responsive to societal needs widely interpreted (and not just to mean market forces)

Presently, such an ideal is to be found in few institutions or amongst few teacher This is due to social pressures and inadequacy of resources which have forced these institutions to drift from their assigned role In cases, they merely award degrees Many students also join these institutions not for learning but to acquire these labels which in an increasingly competitive market for jobs are a passport to entry, independent of their learning

The result is indifference amongst students and as a reaction, indifferent teaching and absenteeism Buildings, labs and other facilities are in a pathetic state partly due to this state of mind (also due to resource crisis and corruption) Research also suffers due to paucity of facilities

Perhaps a partial solution lies in recognising that there are two distinct roles that higher education can play Many students come to increase their employability—either by acquiring labels or useful training/ skills There is a great demand for professional/ vocational training Courses in engineering, medicine, finance and commerce can deal with these requirements The other role can be the ideal role defined above—oriented towards pursuit of ideas The division suggested here is only analytical, for the sake of simplicity, but in reality there would be overlap Such a division suggests that the concerns, goals, and attitudes of the two sectors are different and perhaps clashing, say, in the nature of facilities required, the criterion of assessment and the requirements of faculty

In basic sciences, research has been allowed to languish in the Universities due to paucity of resources Funds have been diverted to institutions, like, the CSIR and Space agency While this is necessary for goal-oriented research, basic research is no less important since it provides new leads to society Past experience shows that Universities are the cradle of such research because of the presence of young minds, uncluttered by pre-conceived ideas Of course a proper balance has to be struck and this requires debate

In order to achieve objectives stated above, it is essential that the University has autonomy, as such objectives cannot be achieved by external impositions or regulation Demand for autonomy pre-supposes a teaching community that is aware, responsible and mature, which is what one expects from a faculty involved in high scholarship Most academic pursuits are done by self-driven and motivated faculty, and such people flourish best in an atmosphere of freedom Accountability should be demanded but not through over regulation and bureaucratisation which kills all creativity This must be based on self-motivation and discipline

Autonomy is needed at two levels Broadly speaking

a) College/University level vis-a-vis UGC/ Government

b) Within College/University functioning of departments and of the teachers

At present these institutions function with their hands tied Every institution desires to survive and function in a matter best shifted for its self-preservation so why so many controls on the Universities? UGC imposes controls to regulate minimum standards But has it achieved that purpose? For example, NET requirement for recruitment of lecturers is being resented by most Universities barring those in metropolitan areas Our country is vast with widely different categories of students, educational needs and resources Though knowledge at this level is universal and it is important to maintain rigorous standards, unfortunately such standards have not evolved in our country yet It is important to bear this in mind while considering the question of autonomy No country has uniform standards in all its institutions of higher learning Standards have to be ensured through the peer group

Specific points regarding autonomy

A General Features

1 Flexible cadre

The University should have the authority to redesignate positions among ranks Basic qualifications for different ranks should be decided by the Universities according to their regional needs, etc Even the ranks could be different, depending upon the tasks undertaken

2 Flexibility and autonomy in Promotion and Recruitment

Rational promotional schemes are absolutely necessary in view of the fact that expansion of University is grinding to a halt UGC-imposed constraints have not resulted in uniform standards with regard to promotions It is suggested that locally evolved criteria may be more effective

Universities badly need to attract talent Blind and secretive recruitment procedures have proved disastrous More open and flexible procedure is required, in which the faculty plays a wider role in identifying the talent Further, our procedures of selection are too slow and bureaucratic which discourage new prospective entrants, and we end up losing truly motivated people Constitution of Selection Committees should be more flexible and should have larger internal representation Faculty views must be formally sought

3 Autonomy in Service Conditions

Same service conditions in different disciplines/ different regions are not suitable The University should have freedom to use the allocated amount in a flexible and free way to suit its needs

B Autonomy within the University/Colleges

WE propose a general decentralisation of academic decision making to Schools/Departments/Centres including courses and curricula, conduct of examinations and admission procedures Teachers should be given full responsibility for designing of courses and assessment Internal assessment must be introduced There is a need to democratise representation in EC & AC Junior faculty needs to be involved in more decision making We are well aware of the misuse of autonomy in our educational institutions A good fraction of our teaching community, based on their experience, argue for greater checks and controls But we feel this is a reflection of the general malaise that afflicts higher education, and in such a milieu externally imposed controls are often subverted If the University sector is restricted and has clear-cut commitments to academic pursuits, such autonomy and faith are essential

VI. Accountability

THE above discussion on autonomy points to the interlinked nature of autonomy and accountability Yet, *how higher education would be accountable to the rest of society needs to be separately spelt out lest it be misunderstood that the academic community is trying to evade the issue* Crudely put, it may be understood as usefulness to society But this is no simple matter since it can be defined either in terms of immediate returns or in the long run sense of intangible benefits which cannot be valued today

Any society has to not only consider its immediate prospects but also its long-term viability Both are vital and interconnected In today's world, with rapid changes, horizon's have narrowed so that the immediate dominates over the long run Mistakes are being made with a rapidity that by the time they are discovered it is perhaps too late to rectify them They become the base for further mistakes Boosting the national economy through unbridled consumerism, allowing markets to increasingly determine human behaviour, letting information flows take place without any social restraint are perhaps some examples There are no simple answers to any of these problems but they cannot be resolved unless a long-term view is taken

Higher education also faces this dilemma For instance, a young teacher may be required to produce three papers a year and a book in three years, for a period of six to eight years to get a promotion While writing such papers disciplines an individual, it may make most who produce such an output to believe this is what research is, whereas it may require little originality and mostly parametric shifts in some basic model This may damage genuine research because few would be able to run counter to the tide and also because it would produce white noise which could easily mask the useful signal It is argued with some justification that if 95% of the papers had never been written, it would have been no loss to society

Similarly, counting the number of hours spent in the class room giving lectures can be counterproductive beyond a point First, it cannot ensure quality and secondly, it may result in students becoming unnecessarily dependent on the teachers and their initiative may be killed Similarly, the number of hours spent in the institution is no indicator of the work done Actually, time may be more productively spent in the library, reading at home or in a seminar

In brief, while *the number of hours spent in the class room or in the institution or the number of papers published is important, no mechanical notion of accountability based on them would be appropriate for higher education* In fact, some of these criteria may actually result in demotivation of individuals and this would affect quality, the key to higher education

Quality and contribution to society in the long run are best judged by the peer group and at times even that may fail Breakthrough are not appreciated for a long time as the famous case of Galileo illustrates Thus, everything must be done to create a viable peer group A dynamic system and a viable peer group mutually depend on each other It is the loss of dynamism and the absence of a peer group that have led people to suggest mechanical notions of accountability

What has come in the way of creation of a peer group? It is the loss of autonomy of institutions and of the individuals within them that have weakened peer groups Vice-chancellors and principals are often appointed for non-academic reasons like their capacity to deliver favours to their bosses or as reward for past services or for secretarian reasons and not because of their standing in the teaching community.

Rather than protect the institution's autonomy, they have sacrificed it and to cover their actions, they curb the independent minded and promote groups of supporters. Such petty politics creates divisions and demoralisation. Mechanical notions of accountability are applied to those who are seen to be independent and for the favoured ones, rules are bent. This is the bane of many an institution of higher learning in India.

Such people see a threat to themselves in autonomy and democratisation and treat it as insubordination and indiscipline. They do not like transparency in action and believe in divide and rule. Much energy is spent in politicking. Large bureaucracies get created since teachers cannot be trusted and centralisation of power follows. All this is inimical to the concept of higher education and its accountability.

The peer group remains weak since the orientation of the so-called good academics is outward. The definition of 'good' academic is based on western notions—how many papers published in western journals, how many conferences attended abroad, where was the Ph.D. or post-doc done, etc.? It is often argued that *research is universal and has no national boundaries.* Laws and models are not specific to space and time.

However, society is space and time specific. It has needs which it wants fulfilled from institutions of higher learning. If knowledge generated by good academics is irrelevant to society it undercuts accountability and makes society question such higher education. If knowledge is only a recycled version of what the peer group abroad is producing, then society can also get it first-hand from the same foreign sources and the students can also go abroad for advanced research and learn directly from those who are at the frontiers. This marginalises academics in India and reduces their relevance to society. With their role in question, they would neither appear to be relevant nor accountable in spite of their best effort. Some claim that higher education does not come out so well in cost benefit analysis.

Industry is not willing to invest in R&D since it is risky and more advanced technology is available off the shelf from foreign sources. So IIT graduates do little research but move into management or civil services or go abroad. Government can directly approach the World Bank or the UN agencies or experts in Harvard or Oxford for advice. *This forces Indian institutions to become mechanical reproducers of knowledge developed elsewhere.* Even a premiere institution like AIIMS apparently does no more than this. The better institutions, like, IITs and IIMs, become the conduit to feed low-cost talent into foreign institutions. This subverts the research programmes and makes teaching mechanical and uninteresting in spite of the existence of the so-called 'good' academics in the system. The good academics spend an enormous amount of time trying to figure out ways to go abroad and their commitment to their own institutions and students left behind (who are on the average not so well trained) remains weak.

Accountability is caught in the pincer of the 'good' academic whose commitment is weak and the rest who are demoralised due to the bureaucratisation and the loss of autonomy. The argument here is not that India should isolate itself from the rest of the world but that there should not be a one-way relationship. The peer group should be national and not only international.

While research may be universal, often its focus is based on perceived needs of society and solutions that emerge are also in a social context. The danger is that problems may be perceived out of context and the solutions proposed may not be relevant since the models have been recycled from elsewhere. For instance, West has provided the model of development for modern India along with a technology package. Many have felt this is not relevant for our needs.

Indian journals and conferences and workshops should be second to none. Relevance to national needs cannot be the only concern but should be a large one. Decision making needs to be transparent and various bodies should be democratised. Power should not be confined to small groups, it should be decentralised. None of this can be achieved without the collective will of the nation and the academic community.

It may be argued that while what is said above may create the climate for accountability it may not be able to ensure it. The point is that there are no short cuts available. The attempt in the last thirty years to introduce mechanical notions of accountability has not only not succeeded but has actually aggravated the problems. Only a collective will and a vision can change the situation if efforts are made in the right direction.

Student evaluation is important for the self-improvement of teachers. It is a feedback for the teacher. It presupposes a mature student community which must be allowed to evolve. Internal evaluation and student faculty committees are important to rebuild the contact between the teacher and the student. Reduced emphasis on foreign peer group is needed as a collective self-discipline

Selections should be transparent

There is also the need to rethink the forms of protest which the academic community needs to adopt Over time, protest took the form of strike and boycott of classes In an atmosphere of distrust, non-responsiveness and control, this has been seen as anti-authority

In today's atmosphere where only the coercive power of groups in society matters for obtaining concessions, these instruments have been seen to be essential But this creates the impression in the wider community that teachers, like, other workers, shirk work If the structures of higher education are changed along the above lines, then even the present instruments of protest would become redundant

VII. Subsidy and Valuation : Private and Public Funding

Higher education yields a social return greater than what the individual valuation of it may be This is due to the many contributions of higher education which are not immediately apparent to the individual In the economic literature, such goods are called *'merit wants'* and theory suggests that these goods need to be subsidised by the state so that society benefits as a whole The *subsidy enables the society to have more of these goods than the private markets and individual effort would produce on their own*

To many it appears that the individual appropriates the return from education individually but does not pay for it since it is subsidised The wider social return is too defused to be apparent This creates a confusion which is not easily sorted out and results in a conservative view of education In this view, subsidy is undesirable and state funding is decried It is suggested that private funding should be adequate

In this context, the issue of the social relevance and link of education with markets is raised It is argued that professional colleges train students for professional jobs and there is a direct link with earning so that they can charge more for the education they provide Commercial centres training students for IIT entrance, IAS exams, etc, also charge more But what is forgotten is that the base for these students is prepared by the general education received by them These commercial institutions only skim the cream off general education

The valuation of higher education is difficult since the social benefits are too diffused These are over a time dimension which is difficult to specify It is for this reason that it is difficult to quantify the value of this profession Only a general statement may be made regarding its importance like, 'mother of all professions' Relative valuation on the basis of salaries currently paid is tautological and does not reflect the correct position

As already argued, *dependence on private funding alone will lead to a much narrower base of higher education than today* In this day and age, when the deprived sections, like, the Dalits or the backward or women are seeking upward mobility through higher education, to restrict its spread would be a blow to the rising consciousness of these sections

VIII. Income Relativities and Social Waste

Good research and teaching cannot be bought with money Internal motivation is its pre-requisite While this may be independent of monetary considerations, it is linked to the status enjoyed by the individual, the level of satisfaction and the infrastructure available Hence there is an indirect link to the salary levels in the market-determined society and to the facilities available to the academics

The salary structure is important not so much for retaining talent but for entry point decisions of the youth entering the job market They compare the entire lifetime expected incomes and the associated life style, for making this decision Income relativities are important in today's world dominated by the notion of markets and consumerism A career path is chosen to serve this purpose Their decision seems to be made long before they are aware of the differences in the nature of the jobs and the lifestyles involved Social concerns are immaterial to this choice Hence a large number of IIT graduates after an expensive training go abroad or into management or into civil services

When they go abroad, they largely take up jobs appropriate to their skills But this involves a loss to the national economy Only a tiny fraction of these students return to contribute to the nation Those going into management and civil services perform tasks for which their training is inappropriate and they require retraining at further expense Further, teaching jobs in technical institutions remain vacant or are filled by those who have not necessarily excelled in the subject

This is the problem of paying high salaries to jobs requiring relatively lower skills but paying less for jobs requiring higher skills The nation loses both ways More expense is incurred in training and essential jobs are inadequately performed If two thousand students get diverted from Sciences, IITs and Medicine to say civil services which requires a Masters only, Rs 30 crore would be lost This does not reflect the true cost since tens of thousands of students write the exams and postpone entry into the job market by two to three years They also join coaching classes which entails further expense

Inappropriate parity in salary with other comparable jobs results in disturbance to the programme of higher education Students wait for the opportunity to shift Even lecturers are waiting to move to better paying jobs thus commitment remains low and demoralisation sets in when there is failure to shift since the profession is not the chosen one

The research programme gets disoriented Students are constantly distracted by exams, etc, when they could be contributing to research The supervisors also lose motivation when this happens repeatedly No mechanical notion of discipline can rectify such behaviour

Finally, it needs to be pointed out that today, due to the dominance of the market processes, *private sector salaries have gone totally out of line with those in academia* While earlier, top salaries were limited to Rs 3 5 lakh, now top managers can get Rs 50 lakh The average private sector salaries have also risen by such proportions The market determined process which has totally *changed the income relatives has generated enormous dissatisfaction and created social tensions* These can only be mitigated in the context of an overall national income policy

IX. Structure of Education and Expenditures Some Relevant Data

Item	*Elementary*	*Secondary*	*Higher*
Enrolment (1992-93)	123,976,228	41,212,448	6,581,506
% Growth rate 80-81 pr	8 33	8 08	7 25
% Expenditure 91-92	43 8	30 5	13 2
Per student annual exp in 91-92 at 80-81 pri (Rs)	277	524	2079
Estimated per student annual exp 97-98 (Rs)	970	1834	7277
Approx per stud exp IIT		Rs 1 lakh	
(current annual cost) JNU Msc		Rs 52,700	
JNU MA		Rs 41,600	
JNU Ph D Sc		Rs 57,500	
JNU Ph.D Arts		Rs 47,890	

Sources of data
Row 1 to 4 NIEPA
Row 7 to 10 Based on data for 1991-92 in the Rajaraman Committee Report on JNU
Row 6 Rough estimate

X. Proposal for a Parity Scheme

COST of useful training for various jobs should be worked out (Of course, someone overqualified may also do a particular job but this should not be taken into account in the costs of training for that job) Such an exercise could give the proportions in which the salaries of those jobs should be fixed

In other words, *income relativities should be based on the nature of skills required and the cost of acquiring it Supply and demand may temporarily distort these patterns but these would not be permanent in nature* Today's supply and demand patterns are not necessarily a true reflection of the situation since they are governed by the inappropriate signals from the salary structures or the prevailing power structures

For instance, if a job requiring a Secondary degree has a starting pay of Rs 100 then a job requiring a BA or BSc should be paid around Rs 160 to Rs 220 and for a job requiring an MA or an MSc the remuneration should be Rs 220 to Rs 300 and for that requiring Ph D Rs 350 to Rs 600 These are only *indicative* figures but suggest that salary differentials need not be very large in society Differential costs between the social sciences and natural sciences and technical institutions would exist but averages may be used for pay fixation

The need for uniform salary structures across disparate structures in higher education stems from the essential unity of different subjects Learning is in the context of society even in the fields of Science and Technology Why it advances rapidly at times or slowly at other times is linked with the social context? Above all, it is Man who perceives (the observer) whether in social sciences or in natural sciences and it is his progress that learning is all about

Clearly, Man, the observer, is the product of some sub-set of the totality of knowledge socially available at a time The broader the sub-set, more socially complete the individual is It is higher education which enables the individual to broaden her/his perspective and understand the unity of all knowledge Placing knowledge in one area on a higher plane than in others can only do violence to learning and result in social problems

This is the reason, scientists and engineers learn some basics of social sciences and social scientists learn something individuals from not only not perceiving the unity amongst all subjects but often even of their own field Commercialisation has added to the pressures to specialise narrowly The nature of accountability based on the number of papers or books published every year has also forced a degree of specialisation which is unnecessary Even the best brains find it difficult to come up with one new idea in many years so that many papers can be written every year only within narrow fields

We need to resist these pressures which force learning into narrow grooves and revive the idea of higher education being a whole If this is an acceptable framework, it is easy to see that all subjects should be treated on par

XI. Islands of Excellence

IT is often suggested that a poor nation cannot have a world class infrastructure for its entire system of higher education This is true given the costs involved A solution proposed is to create islands of excellence Like, the IITs This has created a vast differentiation and led to several kinds of problems Those in the elite institutions typically do not think of the rest of the country as their peer group and tend to be outward oriented This creates a divide and leads to several kinds of problems, including brain drain, lack of commitment to the institution, unconcern about social relevance and dissatisfaction all around

Such a formulation is unable to address the problem of average standards in the country It leads to a low standard of the average intake in the elite institutions and creates difficulties with regard to the level at which to pitch the teaching and research programme It also results in good students going abroad rather than staying on to do research in the country and affects the quality of the research programme In other words *it imposes costs and leads to loss of dynamism of higher education—quite the opposite of what it is intended to do*

XII Proposed Salary Structure

CONSIDERING the needs of a poor society like India, it is felt that the salary structures should bear a relationship with the per capita income which by definition reflects the average income level in the country Further, considering the need for attracting and retaining talent in different professions, income relativities should be based on the cost of acquiring skills

To take care of the former, there is a need to have an incomes policy which determines the absolute levels of inequity that society is willing to accept within the constraints of every one having the socially determined necessary minimum This should be able to take care of living conditions which allow a dignified existence to all citizens

As for the latter, it is clear (Section X) that an income differential of 1 4 at the start of the scales is quite adequate Within any job, people acquire skills and experience as time goes by and need to be given an increase in income and this is what should determine the salary scales These scales should not disturb the relativities in incomes Of course, there may be some temporary deviations due to scarcities of certain kinds of skills but these should not disturb the relativities permanently

Further, *considering the argument for a non-hierarchical system in higher education, it is proposed that there be one continuous salary scale for all teachers There should be efficiency bars every five years which a teacher can jump (if she/he so desires) to get a 10% salary increase on the basis of certain well-defined criterion This is like a fast track*

While comparisons in relative incomes with the bureaucracy are not desirable, this is forced on the teaching community since the pay are revised when the salaries of the bureaucracy come up for review They become the benchmark even if undesirable Keeping this limitation in mind, the following is proposed

Given the requirements of a higher minimum degree and of a good degree as the starting point of a college teacher, *the starting salary for teachers is proposed to be 25% higher than that of a comparable bureaucrat even though the cost is higher by 38% The cost of acquiring a Ph D raises costs by another 50%* Someone who acquires a Ph D should be allowed a jump in the basic by 25% At the top of the scale, for the sake of equity, a teacher's salary should go to 10% more than the salary of a comparable person in the bureaucracy The fellowship amount paid to the research scholars should equal the starting lecturer's salary Without such a provision, it would be difficult to attract talent for research

Considering that there is inadequate provision of housing on campuses and in towns, rent eats a substantial portion of the young faculty's income, *a higher proportionate HRA is suggested at the lower levels of incomes* For the lower third of the scale, HRA should be 40% of basic, for the next third, it should be 35% of basic and for the last third, it should be 30% of basic

All attempts should be made to provide on campus housing to the entire faculty For this, the use of PF and funds lying in the House Building Advance pool should be used

Health is another area which deserves urgent attention Its costs are rising dramatically with the breakdown of the public health system and the emergence of high cost private sector The Colleges can offer to their faculty *high quality health insurance and group attachment to good general hospitals*

There is need to properly index salaries to the cost of living index Salaries have to be repeatedly revised since they go out of line with the cost of living This creates problems of maintaining relative parity which gets disturbed every time a new pay commission is set up Of course, there is no perfect system since the consumption basket alters over a period of time But, the problem is compounded by the fact that *typically salaries are not fully indexed*

Currently, at Rs 4,700 of basic, the DA and ADA which are not indexed, amount to Rs 7,056 Thus only 40% of the salary is indexed and that too by 75%—indexation is only to the extent of 30% *It is proposed that salaries be fully indexed and on the gross emoluments This will reduce the frequency of review required*

With the above proposals, the salary scale for teachers should be Rs 10,000 - 300 - 13,000 - 400 - 17,000 - 500 - 22,000 - 600 - 28,600 Efficiency bar after every five years of service All structures and subjects in higher education to have the same salary scales since there is a unity of learning

XIII Critical Aspects of the Rastogi Committee Recommendations and the Alternatives

1 *The problems faced by higher education in India are manifold The most often mentioned one is that of quality* Even though the country is supposed to have the third largest scientific and technical manpower in the world, its average quality is suspect While the country has many centres of excellence and substantial achievements to its credit, our contribution to the cutting edge of knowledge is far less than our numbers imply This is due to the poor quality of our average higher education

In this context, *the most often heard complaints* are that classes are not held by teachers and the infrastructure like, libraries and laboratories are inadequate to the task at hand It is said that there is rampant malpractice in appointments and admissions (including corruption) Malpractices in examinations are supposed to be widespread so that degrees are not worth the paper they are on Syllabi are not revised often enough to take care of the latest developments in the field These are the result of inadequate autonomy to academics and their institutions and because of the bureaucratically conceived notion of accountability which has led to demotivation

2 Though the Rastogi Committee was set up to suggest the salary structure for higher education in the country, it *has not given the rationale for how teachers' salaries should be fixed nor given a justification for its suggestion* Instead, the Committee has focussed on the perceived shortcomings of higher education and on changing service conditions and implementing stricter control

The Committee has simply suggested a parity with Grade B services but not indicated the reason for doing so It has not considered how this would either help attract the best talent to this profession or how would it be retained with a lower pay parity The justification for lack of parity with IIT's etc, has not been provided

The argument underlying its suggestions is not only unclear but seems to be irrational and its implications unacceptable to the academic community

3 The Committee has also not suggested an appropriate *indexation scheme* This is an important shortcoming of the Report There should be complete indexation of the salary

4 The scheme of *promotions and selection* proposed by the RC has been found to be wanting since its suggestions are seen to promote greater bureaucratic controls and numerical performance criterion which are actually the root of the problem rather than the solution This problem is resolved in our proposed continuous salary scale which allows individuals to choose the path they desire, of slow movement based on long-term performance goals or a quick path Academics freed of the tensions of promotions are likely to give a good account of themselves since then they would need to perform for their peer group

One example of how democratisation has helped is the headship of departments by rotation The freedom this gave to academics has enabled the departments to function better and more productively For similar reasons, it is felt that there is no need for the proposed special Professors and Principals

University and College bodies should be democratised and power should not be allowed to get centralised Transparency should be introduced at every level

5 The *selection of faculty members* may also be based on greater inputs from the peer group than at present Prospective candidates for a post may be allowed to come to the department and interact with the faculty and students through presentation

of seminars The input from this process should be reported to the selection committee and formally taken into account This will enable the wider community to exercise a pressure on the selection committees. There will perhaps be greater transparency in the process and it may be less susceptible to manipulation

6 It is proposed that there should be *more of independent study than formal teaching* For this, there is need for greater teacher-student interaction and less of formal lecturing It would require better libraries and their optimum utilisation through keeping them open for longer hours Libraries should be interconnected through networks, accessible to scholars Computer services should also be widely shared across institutions and access to internet available at central locations

7 There is need for *greater autonomy of functioning for departments and projects* In the present system where everything is to be sanctioned/approved by the bureaucrats, apparently they are trusted more than the academics This has led to the development of enormous bureaucracies and waste In JNU, the ratio of students to teachers to non-teaching staff is approximately 10 1 4 5 If economies result through rationalisation in the last-mentioned component, it may provide 20% more funds for academic work We need to think about it and find ways of doing it

Decentralisation of financial and other powers would greatly reduce overheads and enable academics to spend a greater portion of their time on useful work Thus money allotted to education would go much farther than at present

8 Far more funds need to be allotted for housing and health

9 The extra funds needed for the enhanced salaries and improved infrastructure would come out of reduced expenditures on the bureaucracy and *a special proposed fund based on an education cess on the tax payers The rationale for such a proposal is that those who have benefited from higher education should contribute to it for wider social good* The corporate sector benefits from the education of its employees through increased productivity The individual tax payer has benefited from her/his education As such, it is proposed that a cess be levied on corporate and personal income tax The tax rate can be 10% of the income without exemptions This payment of cess would be tax deductible

10 With the above proposals for funding additional expenditures in higher education, *state funding would dominate* In effect, the debate over private vs public funding would be resolved since the contributions would come from the private sector

The nation is not short of resources They are simply being misdirected, say, into unbridled consumerism Resources cannot be the argument to pit one level of education against the other The benefits from higher education may be lower than from elementary education but are far higher than from many other pursuits (or simply from waste) which today receive priority India is poor and resources need to be optimally utilised, *if at all, the choice is not between elementary and higher education* (see data in Table) *but between education and social waste* The latter may be the source of some funds for the former through the proposed cess

If individuals and firms wish to give funds over and above the cess, they should be encouraged to do so but through the institutional route This would shield individuals from certain kinds of pressures that exist today and derail academic programme in the name of competition

11 *Accountability is an essential component of academic work but it is linked to the issue of autonomy No mechanical and bureaucratic method would work given the distinctiveness of higher education in comparison to other professions* Such methods can only do further damage to the environment in these institutions Accountability has languished due to the demoralisation in the community resulting from the truncation of autonomy at various levels and the dominance of non-academic considerations amongst those at the helm of affairs The problem needs to be viewed in the context of long term rather than in the immediate (say, based on commercial considerations)

The emergence of a dynamic peer group is the only solution and all efforts should be made by the community to make this feasible Only the collective will and a broad vision can ensure that this happens otherwise we will constantly face pressures to accept bureaucratic norms For instance, student valuation should be welcome as the means for self-improvement by the teacher Mechanical notions also need to be rejected so that those who are not yet demotivated and still wish to work are not harrassed Every attempt should be made to expand this pool

12 There is a *need to build a new indigenous culture in our institutions of higher education Western norms based on the needs of a rich and consumerist society are inappropriate to the Indian needs* For instance, in the West, teachers are not at the top of the salary structure and yet their education system maintains a dynamism This is currently based on the inflow of

substantial talent from the Third World For these migrants, the salary comparisons are with what they would have received back home—a tiny fraction of what they would get in the advanced nations Indian institutions do not have such a supply base so that the solutions have to be indigenous without reference to outsiders In fact the existence of such a system outside is a part of the problem facing the academia

We view the Western model as a successful one and are influenced by it because a large number of us have come from there or have our peer group there Our research depends/derives considerably from their theories so that with a few exceptions a one-way relationship has tended to evolve This has often dictated our agenda which is perhaps not good for the dynamism of our system of higher education

In this context, it is suggested that foreign students should not be seen as the milch cow for raising resources They should be charged the same fee as the Indian students The foreign student community is an important part of any institution since it enables a widening of horizons for students It also builds links between nations We should not ape the Western countries in this matter and set our own standards ■

J S RAJPUT Quality of School Education

(Continued from page 10)

indepth analysis of the existing scenario is essential before any new programme is launched by the teacher training institutions

Efforts made to provide equality of access to children are no guarantee of their availing the same They need to be persuaded and prepared to join schools It is essential to create an environment that would retain them in the school for the desired number of years In addition to these two components, the quality and relevance of education imparted shall be regularly monitored by the parents and the community even if they are illiterates There are instances where children have been withdrawn from schools because the parents found that the school was irregular and the children were not learning anything Umpteen studies have established that in all efforts to universalisation of elementary education, teachers' role can never be taken over by anyone else Nothing tangible would be achieved by the individual teacher or the system if the teacher is not a true professional Professionals have to be provided rigorous initial orientation and training which should inculcate skills of life-long learning A teacher who stops learning ceases to be a teacher ■

Education, Scientific Temper and Development

N.V.K MURTHY

Prof Murthy is the Member-Secretary, Board of Trustees, Indian Institute of Education, Pune The following paper he presented at the J P Naik Memorial Seminar on 'Education and Poverty Alleviation' (Pune, August 30-31, 1997)

The very title of the subject for the discussion today, "Education and Poverty", is a recognition of the fact that no poverty alleviation, much less its abolition, is possible without harnessing education as a tool for achieving this aim The Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, set for himself and the country the goal of wiping every tear from every eye, because he realised that happiness and poverty cannot coexists It implies that poverty is man-made and not God ordained In such a context, to talk of development ignoring any reference to poverty is hypocritical

At the outset, it would help if we could arrive at a common understanding of the concepts of education, scientific temper and development Though these words are bandied about freely in everyday use, it is remarkable how differently each one of us understands what they signify

While education at one end of the spectrum has been understood as the learning of the three Rs—reading, writing and 'rithmetic—at the other end of the spectrum, it stands for a certain sophistication of the mental faculty which can cope with the highest concepts of philosophy and metaphysics

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IN the history of mankind, however, education of either kind has been an activity restricted to certain sections of the people Even while the processes involved in sheer survival we learnt by most people during the process of living itself, organised education of some sort was obviously one of the characteristics of a society developed enough to prove a surplus of essential goods—enough to provide leisure for certain sections of the population to indulge in activities which were not concerned with immediate problems of survival It is not difficult to perceive education as one such activity It is also not difficult that at such a state of the development of society, social and economic interests of certain sections were different from those of other sections Under such circumstances, one could visualise what the aims of the educators could be They would obviously include, apart from the rudiments of the three Rs, the knowledge and the skills needed to provide a stable society In other words, maintaining the status quo becomes one of the important aims of society

Let us now examine what scientific temper means Though scientific temper has always existed in human society, the understanding of this concept and what it means is a fairly recent phenomenon It is easily misunderstood as a knowledge of basic scientific facts This automatically associated it with material and biological sciences and is thought to be irrelevant to other disciplines like economics, political science and sociology However, the fact is that a scientific temper is a part of any learning process, whatever the discipline of study may be It is often referred to as the method of science To understand this, one could go back to how scientific truths are arrived at Perceptive persons observe natural phenomena and try to make connections between various observations Whether it is the fall of an apple or the movement of planets resulting in an eclipse, these observations are made and connections perceived Then comes the testing of these theories If time and again the same set of observations are made in conjunction with the same set of events, then the validity of the theories is established and provides a guide post to the future traveller in the same path This method of science, as it is sometimes called, is not restricted to the study of physical or biological sciences only This is a method inherent in the study and research of any discipline, economics, political science or sociology In fact, the depth of understanding of these disciplines as they impinge on human society depends on the extent to which one has mastered and internalised the method of science and has applied it to the study at hand This background is necessary to properly understand the role of education and the havoc wrought by centuries of miseducation assiduously promoted by vested interests

At this point, it will be necessary to make a diversion and look at the forces which result in what has been called "miseducation" If education enables us to understand the world that we live in and empower us to seek to change the circumstances we live in, then miseducation could be said to be anything that prevents us from doing so It is easy then to see that the greatest obstacle to education is nurturing an unthinking mind which readily accepts superstition as gospel truth While discussing the cultural heritage of India, Jawaharlal Nehru in his *Discovery of India* has made a very pertinent remark He says that almost every religion in the world has invented a heaven after life and every human being is exhorted to prepare himself or herself for entering this heaven after life by being pious and meek by accepting whatever his or her lot may be in this life Nehru goes on to say that this is a clever ploy to enforce subservience to the existing scheme of things Whether one accepts such a view of religion or not, the fact remains that organised education, religious or lay, has always had the aim of maintaining the status quo

Now to turn to development For over a century after the Industrial Revolution, development was understood only in terms of accumulation of wealth or what came to be called as the Gross National Product of a nation It was only when perceptive economists like the Nobel Prize winner Gunnar Myrdal started questioning this yardstick for measuring development, that set attitudes of people towards this problem began to change Instead of the GNP of a country, the quality of life of the people in the country started to attract the attention of social scientists Thus development studies encompassed both the disciplines of economics and sociology If the French Revolution succeeded in popularising the concept of *"Liberte, Fraternite, Egalite"*, and thus led to the voicing of the demand for freedom and equality by hitherto oppressed people, the Russian Revolution, in the second decade of the twentieth century, brought to the fore the dream of a classless society While classical capitalist, rooted in the ideal of individual freedom, triggered by the French Revolution took the route of industrial capitalism, monopolism, imperialism and latter-day multi-national cartels, socialism triggered by the Russian Revolution, took the route of state monopoly, centralised planning of production and distribution In the event, both the system led to enormous distortions as far as the distribution of wealth was concerned and only increased the tensions between the haves and the have nots Both systems nurtured corruption that has corroded the very soul of man while gloating over the gross material wealth they created This poses a tremendous challenge to educationists because they need to find out ways and means to undo the damage that has been done to humanity as a whole and put the human race back on the track of survival in the short run and progress in the long run This calls for an understanding of the basic facts of political, economic and sociological forces and their interaction

Added to this is a more urgent problem of environmental degradation In the name of development, man has been abusing the bounty of nature—forest wealth, water resources, fuel and mineral resources In the process, the very basis of life, air, water and soil are being destroyed Against this background, the whole understanding of development has changed The traditional idea of development of the industrial age as the increase in the gross national product is being questioned The question constantly coming up is, development of what and for whom? With the growing realisation that the earth's natural resources are limited and the overuse of these would lead to global disaster, people have started to rethink their ideas of development Development is no longer a matter of increasing material possessions The question of human happiness is constantly appearing in these debates What is happiness and how can it be attained? What is the aim of human endeavour in the march towards progress? How does one measure progress? These are questions no longer restricted to the domain of philosophy These are urgent questions which have to be faced by every one of us, because they concern the very survival of the human race

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In this grim scenario then, what is the role of education and the educationist? To answer this question one has to go back to what was pointed out at the beginning of this paper It is neither the mere learning of the three Rs or the attainment by a few the high mental ability to grasp philosophical concepts Education has to deal with enabling every individual to lead a meaningful life and engage in the pursuit of happiness But this is easier said than done The main reason is the environment in which the process of education is carried on As pointed out earlier, vested interests are always engaged in maintaining the status quo, whereas education, if described as a process to enable each individual to pursue happiness, would involve social change Once it is accepted that education should help in bringing about social change, it is obvious that this can be possible only if individuals are enabled to see their surroundings and understand the interplay of forces therein This is where cultivating a scientific temper comes in

Those who are opposed to any social change may immediately raise the bogey that this would divorce education from tradition and any harm to our tradition would be ruinous As Jawaharlal Nehru never tired of saying, no tradition should be accepted blindly Every tradition has to be questioned and examined for its significance in the light of its contemporary relevance A harmful tradition has to be rejected and a good tradition respected and accepted Some traditions have to be properly understood and reinterpreted in the modern context For example, among forest dwellers, to this day, there is a tradition that deities live in certain areas in the forests Therefore, these areas should be respected as sacred groves and there should be no desecration of life, which means that no harm should be done to any bird or beast or tree Thanks to modern studies by ecologists, we have understood the importance of preserving natural gene banks in the world's diminishing forests In the light of this understanding, we begin to see and appreciate the importance and relevance of this ancient tradition But, the tradition of the caste system, which was a creation of an agricultural feudal society, does not commend itself in the same way It is seen as iniquitous and insulting to human dignity So, this deserves to be condemned and cast aside All this is possible only when a person's mind is enabled to question everything that one encounters in life before accepting it This is essentially what a scientific temper enables one to do It teaches one to raise questions and seek answers rather than accept things blindly

Fifty years ago, we became a free people Soon thereafter, we, the people of India, gave unto ourselves a Constitution which promised us political freedom and social and economic equity Not only have we not yet achieved this but we also seem to be far from doing so Other countries, like Malaysia which became free a whole decade later, have done much better than we have It is high time, therefore, that educationists, both in the fields of formal and informal education, took up the urgent task of bringing about social and economic changes by inculcating, in young and old, a scientific temper, so that we can fulfil the promise we made to ourselves half a century ago ■

Miracles do Happen

DEEPAK PAL

There are some who believe in miracles, there are a few who don't. I, for one, belong to the first category. The magic wand of the invisible magician does the trick, making others envy his exceptional and astounding capacity. Some call it the super natural power, others say it's a miracle. I, again for one, belong to the second category. If there were no miracles, one wouldn't find leafing through the morning newspaper the happy-go-lucky Princess Diana dying in a car crash, one would not suddenly bid good-bye to the Mother of the world, one wouldn't to one's utter surprise see Pete Sampras crashing out of the US Open or one wouldn't find one of the lowly-placed in world football turning champs.

Yes, that's true. They have become South Asian Football Champions—India. One may say that India's winning the championship is no miracle. They started as a favourite. Well, there's no point in arguing. But things should not be taken for granted, for whoever thought that India would be held to a 2-2 draw by Maldives—the under-dogs of the tournament—in their last league encounter?

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So, off to Kathmandu. The Dashrath Stadium in the Capital of Nepal was dressed up in its traditional best for the Third South Asian Football Federation Championship. Besides the hosts Nepal, the six-nation tourney included Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Maldives. The league-cum-knock-out tournament was divided into two groups—Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal comprising Group A and Bangladesh, India, Maldives the Group B. Bhutan is the only South Asian nation that did not take part in the first South Asian Football Federation Cup competition organised and sponsored by the Asian Football Confederation. The standard of football in South Asia is considered the lowest of the continent. The Nepalese newspapers had described the SAFF Cup as the world cup of South Asia and it was wide open. The Nepalese team had a slight edge over the others for they played on their home ground and before a partisan crowd. But they were destined not to lift the trophy. In the opening league match in front of a capacity 2,700 vociferous home crowd the hosts were mauled by Pakistan by two goals to none.

Earlier the tournament was declared open by Nepalese Prime Minister Mr Lokendra Bahadur Chand. Formed in 1989, the South Asian Football Federation had organised the first SAFF Gold Cup tournament in Pakistan in 1992. But, it never saw its second meeting. However, in 1995, a SAFF Bristol Gold Cup was played in Sri Lanka where the hosts emerged the winners, defeating India in the final. The Bristol Cup, too, could not have a second meeting.

"What the Indian boys need is confidence. The players are fully fit and in a position to play more than 90 minutes. Further, they have realised the importance of this tournament," said Syed Nayeemuddin, the Indian coach in Kathmandu. The chances of India participating in the next Asian Games depended on their performance in the tourney. Charged by the coach's faith in them the Indian boys in their opening encounter downed Bangladesh by three clear goals. I M Vijayan scoring two goals and Baichung Bhutia one.

But India had to be contented with a 2-2 draw in their last league match against a spirited Maldives team which came from behind to level the day's proceedings. While Baichung Bhutia headed in off a free-kick by Tushar Rakshit, Jo Paul Ancherv scored off a flag-kick by the Indian skipper Carlton Chapman minutes after the breather. Rasheed Ibrahim and Mohammed Nizam restored the parity.

Now, India were to play Pakistan in the second semi-final to find a berth in the final, and Vijayan's brace did the magic. In this encounter both teams had a number of chances. The game, as it is, never reached any heights, with Pakistan playing a hit-and-run game—a style in vogue in the early seventies. But the tactic did not pay off and Pakistan had to concede defeat, paving the way for the Indian team to meet Maldives in the final. Maldives against the run of play brought about the biggest upset of the tournament accounting for Sri Lanka. Nizam Mohammed finding the roof of the net with a thunder-bolt in the first semi-final.

The final was a different story so far as the Indians were concerned. It was a spirited affair with Indians deciding the match in their favour within 19 minutes—scoring three goals.

For the 30,000-strong spectators the final turned out to be disappointing It was virtually a no-contest affair India were up by a goal in the 9th minute with Anchery drawing the first blood Baichung scored the second goal from a difficult angle from the left Four minutes later Vijayan made it 3-0 Two minutes before the breather, Maldives reduced the margin through Adam Abdul Latheef But India added two more goals within five minutes after resumption—the fourth goal was scored by Amit Das, the hard-working mid-fielder, after Vijayan's shot rebounded off a Maldives defender And, finally Vijayan driving the last nail in Maldives coffin with a delicate push into the far corner of the net

"If there was a man of the tournament award, I am sure it would have gone to Vijayan," said the elated Indian coach Syed Nayeemuddin after the final

Maldivian coach Mr Romula Cortez of Bolivia, while admitting that India really played well and exhibited their best, said "At the same time the Maldivian players could not play to their potential and we conceded the first three goals mainly for defensive lapses However, we lost to a better team," he added

In the third-place play-off match Pakistan got the better of Sri Lanka through a self-goal—the ball deflecting off the Sri Lanka's Hasmeedeen

Doesn't it go to prove that miracles do happen? Or else whoever expected the hosts go down fighting on their home ground, Maldives surprisingly holding India to a 2-2 draw and stunning the holders Sri Lanka with a 2-1 victory in the first semi-final? And then, isn't never a force to reckon with in world football—India—turning the South Asian Champions thereby earning the distinction of qualifying to play in the next Asian Games a miracle?

Well, believe it or not, miracles do happen ■

Open Letter to the Prime Minister

SHANKAR SHARAN

Dear sir,

You would agree that the actual sate of affairs regarding India's security, her relations with friendly or hostile countries do not depend on who is in power in New Delhi Not long ago when you were out of government, after a brief stint as the Foreign Minister, you had made statements expressing deep concern over Chinese activities purporting to threaten India which, you then said, India cannot ignore That situation remains the same

Now you are the head of not only the Foreign Ministry but also of the entire Government of India We naturally want to know what you are doing to secure the country from our great but hostile neighbour Recently Chinese troops have intruded deep into Indian territory several times While the whole world knew about the deliberate Chinese intrusion, no one knows what kind of protest or remedial action the Indian Government has undertaken In another serious incident the Chinese Government has most brazenly insulted Gegong Apang, the Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh Early this year he was first invited by China to an international conference on bio-diversity in Beijing Later they withdrew the invitation, after refusing him a visa to China Again, till now no step has been taken by you, sir, to redeem the national self-respect hurt by the Chinese rulers This assuredly put our country in a poor light before the world community

That the Chinese attitude towards India which is 'friendship in words, hostility in deeds'—has not changed is well-known Apart from the recent instances the nuclear missiles silos in Tibet and equipment transfers to Pakistan are glaring illustrations of the Chinese motive To which the official Indian answer appears to be 'It does not matter, we must be friends' Such a wishy-washy approach has neither earned friendship nor served India's security interests As an experienced diplomat you understand this very well

Therefore, one wonders whether you have any security doctrine at all Your silence over the frequent Chinese hostilities points only to the non-existence of any China policy on your part Sir, this land of Mahatma Gandhi cannot be as helpless as your government shows it to be If you are out of policies and ideas, let a national dialogue begin on how best to defen the Indian borders and Indian interests from hostile neighbours like China There is no use crying over-Pakistan all the time China is a more wily and difficult foe Why conceal it? The situation demands a clear, bold and viable China policy Do you have one?

Shankar Sharan
(A concerned citizen)

D-I/1209, Vasant Kunj,
New Delhi-110070

Reliance is India's most valuable home grown private sector company and a premier architect of wealth in India.

Value Creation Strategies

Strong and consistent financial performance has enabled Reliance to lay the foundation for continuously enhancing shareholder value. Never before has Reliance had the capability it has today for taking advantage of the many opportunities before us Never before have we had in place, the components for profitably growing our business and enhancing shareholder value, as we have in 1997

Reliance aims to build shareholder value by applying value creation strategies across the major business and financial policy dimensions of the company We believe that over a period of time, communication of our strategies achievements and strengths will lead inevitably to the enhancement of value for discerning long term investors

Let me enumerate the **elements of our value creation strategies** on two dimensions financial and business

Financial

Capital Efficiency

We recognise the need to continuously improve capital efficiency as measured by return on equity and sustainable growth of earnings per share, at least on par with global chemical companies **We have set ourselves the target of achieving a 20% compounded growth in earnings per share and a return of 20% on shareholders' funds over the next 5 years** These objectives will ensure sustainable returns to the company **with a healthy margin over its cost of capital through business cycles**

Dividend Policy

We seek to reward shareholders through dividend and capital appreciation **Reliance aims at regularly increasing the dividend rates Our dividend policy emphasises a reasonable dividend pay out ratio of around 25%,** subject to growth plans and the needs for capital planning flexibility

Financial Prudence

We are the only private sector company in India to be rated by three international credit rating agencies We are **committed to maintaining our ratings at the top end of local currency credit ratings and the top end of foreign currency credit ratings** within the constraints of sovereign rating We will retain the financial flexibility to create a capital structure consistent with the needs of maintaining the targeted ratings

Bonus Programme

A bonus offer reflects our confidence in the future earnings growth of the company. We will review actively, a programme of future bonus share issues to enhance shareholder value.

Share Buy Back Programme

It has been conclusively demonstrated by several research studies done internationally that a consistent programme of buy back of shares is instrumental in increasing the wealth of shareholders **We will implement a programme that is consistent with financial prudence, investment options in asset building and aspirations of shareholders** Our shareholders, as also equity research analysts, have communicated to us that the stock market has undervalued our shares and that they represent one of the more profitable investment avenues

A buy back programme, we believe, will go a long way in unlocking this value for our shareholders The new Companies Act, which is yet to become law, would enable us to examine this option to enhance shareholder value

Equity Issuance

We have added Rs 6,500 crores (around US $ 1,800 million) to our networth over the past five years **Based on current plans we do not foresee any further equity dilution, over the next two to three years excluding the outstanding conversions.**

Paperless Trading

During 1996-97, we became one of the first Indian companies to join the depository system We are committed to a paperless system of trading and settlement **Around 20% of the share capital, representing around Rs. 4,000 crores** (around US $ 1,110 million) **of market capitalistion, is already traded in a paperless form.**

Accounting Standards

We have a global investor base To provide a common platform on financial reporting, in addition to Indian accounting standards, **we will also be reconciling our accounts in line with US GAAP standards from the current year.** Your company has appointed International Accountants

Employee Stock Option Programme (ESOP)

We want our employees to be our shareholders. We are providing for a stock option scheme for our employees Reliance seeks to align its employee compensation structure with profitability objectives and shareholder interests An employee must see his own performance and growth derived from and driven by his company's performance and growth Our employee stock option scheme will become a reality under the new Companies Act, when it becomes law

Value Creation Strategies enhance shareholder value at Reliance

Reliance does not foresee any further equity dilution, over the next two to three years

Reliance targets to achieve 20% CARG in EPS and 20% RONW over 5 years

30% compounded annual return to Reliance's shareholders over 20 years

Reliance aims to double its value in the next 5 years

Consistent performance at Reliance

Business

Leading Market Positions

Our strategy of maintaining leading market positions in all of our businesses will continue. Our primary focus will be concentrated on our existing businesses of fibres, petrochemicals, energy and infrastructure. In a developing market like India, we believe, maintaining leading market positions is the key to enhancing shareholder value.

Value Chain

We see the value chain in its totality. We are committed to the manufacture of basic goods in the economy with strong vertical integration. Our businesses being integrated through the value chain allow us to avoid the volatility of individual business segments and maintain respectable performance. This helps us to capture full value from natural resources through feedstocks and intermediates to end products.

Quality and Competitiveness

Reliance believes that superior profitability comes from setting global quality standards and establishing competitive positions. Cost reduction, capital and operational cost competitiveness, capital efficiency and world class quality are the key operational themes for us. **We believe we are geared to perform well - even during periods of downturn in the petrochemical business cycle.**

Technology

We believe in using only 'state-of-the-art' technologies.
Apart from choosing the 'best in class' technologies, our emphasis is on practical applied development, advanced process control and computer integrated manufacturing.

Health, Safety and Environment

The very nature of our business demands the best standards in health, safety and environment protection measures to ensure sustained growth. We are a signatory to the Global Voluntary Responsible Care Initiative.

Intellectual Capital

We believe that the new age of information will demand that successful organisations improve their learning curve. We have to remove functional boundaries, and dramatically change the way we think, believe and act. **Intellectual capital that represents the collective intellect of all the people in an organisation, will be at a premium.** We are investing substantially to enhance the knowledge of our people, and to facilitate this, a Management Development Centre has been initiated.

Goal and Vision

In light of the anticipated robust growth in the Indian economy, and our earnings growth forecast, **we will endeavour to double the value of Reliance in the next five years.**

We plan to achieve this goal though focused growth, capital efficiency **and a single minded emphasis on shareholder value.**

We are **intensely committed to be counted amongst the top companies in the world and** one that is **globally competitive in all its businesses.** We are also committed to uphold a safe workplace, maintain world class environment standards and be a friend of the community.

This is our goal and our vision. It is eminently achievable, given drive, courage and conviction.

Retrospect

A review of our past performance gives us the confidence that we can realise our dreams of the future.

On November 15, 1977, we shared with Indian investors the initial opportunity to participate in Reliance's growth through our first Public Issue. A modest offer of Rs 2.82 crores (US $ 0.7 million). From 58,000 fellow Indian shareholders in 1977, we have grown to become a 2.6 million strong family today. **The largest family of shareholders for any Indian company. And, perhaps, the largest for any company in the world.**

In less than twenty years our sales have multiplied from Rs 67 crores (US $ 18.6 million) to Rs 8,730 crores (US $ 2,425 million). Our networth has grown from Rs 10 crores (US $ 2.7 million) to Rs 8,471 crores (US $ 2,353 million). Our assets have increased from Rs 33 crores (US $ 9.1 million) to Rs 19,536 crores (US $ 5,426 million). And our employee strength from 3,500 to 16,778.

Reliance now enjoys a market capitalisation of nearly Rs 20,000 crores - 2000 times its market capitalisation of Rs. 10 crores in 1977.

We are the only Indian company that has grown so rapidly and created such an enormous amount of economic value for society, and wealth for its shareholders. **We have achieved all this as a first generation enterprise. We have grown from within, in an entirely organic manner.**

We have endeavoured to create value for shareholders with two Bonus Issues, nine very attractively priced Rights Issues and sustained high dividends. **The compounded annual return to shareholders over twenty years has been above 30%.**

	1977 Rs Crs	1977 US $ Mn	1997 Rs Crs	1997 US $ Mn
Sales	67	18.6	8,730	2,425
Networth	10	2.7	8,471	2,353
Assets	33	9.1	19,536	5,426

This has been achieved despite the limited growth prospects in a constrained economic environment prior to the 1991 reforms.

Financial Performance

Over the past five years, we have achieved consistent financial performance against all key indicators.

On an annual compounded basis, our sales have grown 24%, our net profit has grown 52%, our assets have grown 28% and our earnings per share has grown 22%.

It is this performance which has made your company **India's largest private sector company** - a position which we cherish

	91-92 Rs Crs	96-97 Rs Crs	CARG
Sales	3,005	9 020	24%
PAT	163	1,323	52%
Gross Block	4,314	14,665	28%
EPS (Rs)	10 7	28 7	22%

Even as the domestic industry was thrown open to international competition with the lowering of peak import tariffs, Reliance managed to maintain and improve its margins and has demonstrated a consistent financial performance

Given our global cost competitiveness, we are confident of competing among the best in the world, even under declining tariffs

Growth

Hazira Petrochemical Complex

Your Board is convinced that in emerging markets like India where there is potential for strong market growth, the setting up of world scale, low cost production facilities and achieving leading market positions will enhance shareholder value Hence, in a period of general economic slowdown and world-wide downturn in the petrochemical sector, we built productive, world scale and world class assets worth over Rs 9,000 crores (US $ 2,500 million) at Hazira This project culminated in 1997 Eight product plants and around 90 sub-plants have now been commissioned at Hazira About 40,000 construction workers toiling over two years made this happen We are the only Indian company to have translated a vision of such magnitude into a reality Reliance's Hazira Petrochemical Complex represents the largest single investment by a private sector company at a single location anywhere in India

We brought on stream our new, second 200,000 tonnes per year polyethylene plant this month In the coming months, three new plants will go on stream - our third PTA plant with an annual capacity of 350,000 tonnes, our third MEG plant with an annual capacity of 120,000 tonnes and an 80,000 tonnes annual capacity PET plant

We have taken our annual manufacturing capacity from 1 6 to over 6 million tonnes per year - a four fold volume growth that marks our entry into the global chemical club

Jamnagar Petrochemical Complex

We have already embarked on the next phase of our growth at Jamnagar

A new petrochemical complex comprising three paraxylene plants with an aggregate annual capacity of 1 4 million tonnes and a polypropylene plant of 400,000 tonnes per annum is expected to go on stream in the year 1999

On completion, these plants will raise our current manufacturing capacities by another 50% to 9 3 million tonnes per annum

In just five years we would have raised our annual capacity over five times - from 1 6 million tonnes to 9.3 million tonnes.

We are also in the process of developing and implementing a petrochemical complex in Assam through a separate corporate entity

“ We were small then - an infant in industry

We are small now - at the doorsteps

of opportunity ”

- Dhirubhai H Ambani
Chairman Reliance Industries Ltd.

Global Positions

It is a matter of pride for all of us that Reliance has brought India onto the global chemical map We are the fifth largest producer of polyester staple fibre in the world, the sixth largest producer of polyester filament yarn in the world and the tenth largest producer of HPDE/LLDPE in the world The 750,000 tonnes ethylene cracker plant commissioned this year is the largest multi-feed, grassroot ethylene cracker in the world With the completion of current projects at Hazira and Jamnagar, we will emerge as the second largest producer of paraxylene in the world, fifth largest producer of polypropylene in the world, third largest producer of PTA in the world and the tenth largest producer of MEG in the world

Infrastructure Sectors

Our mobile telecom initiative will cover a third of India's population - over 335 million people, equal to the population of the United States It will also cover over a third of India's land mass Reliance Telecom aims to be one of the largest private sector telecom companies in India

Reliance Telecom will be setting up mobile phone service networks in thirteen states of India There is a crying need for investment in communication facilities in the underdeveloped regions of North East India. We will fulfil these needs and significantly contribute to economic growth since it is an established fact that growth in telecom infrastructure accelerates economic development

A basic telephone service network is being set up in Gujarat Gujarat as the most industrialised state in India and with relatively higher per capita income offers good potential for basic telephone services Reliance has a 'home-state' advantage in Gujarat We also enjoy a strong brand recognition among the customers and investors in Gujarat

In the power sector we are developing and implementing three independent power projects in Delhi, Gujarat and Maharashtra, through separate entities, with a total generation capacity of 1,331 mega watts Reliance aims to integrate its forays into the power sector with the group's petrochemical and petroleum businesses

Our oil and gas initiative enables the completion of the integration chain, enhancing value addition Our unincorporated Joint Venture to produce oil and gas from Panna, Mukta and Tapti fields is progressing satisfactorily

Four fold volume growth at Reliance

INTERACT VISION

Reliance is Asia's most competitive chemical company

Reliance became the first corporation in Asia to issue 100-year maturity bonds in the global debt markets

Reliance's sales to approach Rs. 20,000 crores

We recognise that development of the oil and gas sector is vital to the Indian economy The New Oil Exploration Policy of the Government of India and the importance attached to the oil and gas sector have created an environment conducive to rapid growth for new initiatives in the exploration business We will pursue opportunities in this business, which will provide us an avenue for tremendous growth and profitability in the coming years

Financing

Innovation has been the hallmark of Reliance. Take our financing initiatives over the years

We created a solid base of shareholders' funds Building on this, we have accessed international debt markets with innovative offerings

We were the first Indian company to issue GDRs The first to issue a 10-year Euro bond Since 1992, we have raised around Rs 5,000 crores (US $ 1 5 billion) from international financial markets. You will be happy and proud to know that international investors hold your company's name in high esteem We value the access they provide to capital

In January this year, **we became the first corporation in Asia to issue 100-year maturity bonds in the global debt markets.** We thus joined a select club of about 25 companies worldwide that have raised 100-year money The 100 year Issue embodied the faith of international investors-both in the future of India and in the strength of Reliance We also raised bonds with 20 and 30-year maturities All these bonds, worth around Rs 2,200 crores (US $ 614 million), were raised solely on our financial strength and belief in our future These bond issues were a part of the company's strategy to reduce its average cost of capital and increase the average maturity of its debt These bond issues were aimed at enhancing Reliance's competitiveness vis-a-vis its international peer group by bringing the company's cost of capital in alignment with global benchmarks Today, India is on the threshold of capital account convertibility of the Rupee

Prospects

We envisage that the full economic potential of all the plants recently commissioned at Hazira will be realised from the current year, 1997-98 onwards This will translate into a quantum leap in performance and, thereby, enhance shareholder value

Based on firm plans, **our sales are expected to approach the Rs. 20,000 crore milestone by the year 2000.**

All our achievements so far are a part of history **The success of Reliance through the twenty years has been unique, the promise is even greater.** As we approach our twentieth birthday, **we believe it is a new beginning.** We are a young company Vibrant, hopeful, full of energy, and looking forward eagerly to the challenges of tomorrow Reliance's achievements give us the confidence to say - **"A glorious period lies ahead of us."**

Twenty Years of Reliance

India completes fifty years of her independence this year And, **Reliance will soon be completing twenty. Twenty years since the investing public first placed their trust in Reliance.**

In this short period, Reliance has become **Asia's most competitive chemical company, India's most valuable home grown private sector company, and a premier architect of wealth in India.**

In this historic year, when the Indian economy faces new challenges and offers new opportunities in a liberalised regime, **we reaffirm our commitment to taking Reliance to greater heights of success.**

Indian Commitment

Our growth is intimately linked to India's economic growth. We touch the life of every Indian in many ways Our activities cover textiles, polyester, plastics, energy and infrastructure - areas that impact everyday life We serve the basic needs of the masses by providing them with high quality goods at affordable prices 25,000 industrial customers depend on our products With 2,500 showrooms and 35 000 independent retail textile outlets we are present across the vast landscape of India A million Indians derive their employment from our activities **One out of every three investors in India is a part of our family.**

We contribute three per cent of the net tax revenues of India. With a tax contribution of Rs 2,490 crores in the last year, we are one of the top three contributors among Indian companies This is almost twice our net profit We continue to save foreign exchange through import substitution and export efforts Last year we have saved Rs 4,450 crores of foreign exchange for the Indian economy, an increase of 50% over the previous year

Acknowledgments

I thank our 4 million investors from all over the world for standing by us Our 16,778 colleagues from various nationalities for their tireless efforts Over 40,000 construction workers, whose hard work translated our visions into reality at Hazira Fellow members of the Board, for their wise counsel Our 25,000 customers, for being our lifeline Our suppliers, for supporting us Our lenders, for enabling us to grow And our 935 million fellow Indian citizens

Reliance
Industries Limited

Where growth is a way of life.

Excerpts from the statement of Shri Dhirubhai H Ambani Chairman, Reliance Industries Limited These excerpts do not purport to be a record of the proceedings of the 23rd Annual General Meeting held at Mumbai

Making of a Journalist

G S BHARGAVA

It was one of the exciting experiences of my journalistic career spread over forty years. Being the latest, it is also fresh in my mind. I am referring to a recent professional encounter with students of post-graduate class at a journalism school. What lifted my spirits most was that the young people—eighteen girls and seven boys—were all highly qualified, with multiple degrees in some cases, including an MBA, and could have opted for a more lucrative profession if they wanted to. But they have chosen journalism, not even public relations and advertising. This was not the case earlier. For instance, in the early 1980s, I had noticed at some of the universities in Andhra Pradesh that nearly two-thirds of the students preferred public relations to journalism.

What is it that makes these bright youths go in for journalism? Is it the glamour of proximity to celebrities for which the profession is a sure passport? Or an urge to enter politics ultimately? Understandably, their perception of politics and most of its practitioners is not very edifying. So they are not itching for closeness to the tribe. Their motives vary from an idealistic desire to devote themselves to causes like environment and human rights to the pragmatic realisation that journalism gives them exposure and public recognition, setting them apart from their financially better-off counterparts in other avocations. They also see in journalism the necessary flexibility for taking up a whole gamut of causes, which they say is not possible in other careers.

While the first crop of journalists in our country were veritable missionaries imbued with a patriotic urge to promote the freedom movement, by the time my generation entered the profession the idealism had all but evaporated. Nor was it a profession in the fullest sense of the term. It was a twilight situation as it were. In my case, at least, I drifted into the profession because of relative paucity of openings elsewhere. From that perspective to find that today's budding journalists are being driven by purpose, both lofty and mundane, and that they see the medium as an instrument for serving larger causes is nothing less than ennobling. So much for the facile criticism that the press has lost its soul by having become an industry with fairly attractive prospects for its entrants.

Incidentally, one does not have to glorify poverty to pay homage to Gandhiji and Mother Teresa. In most cases, only the indigent know what it is to be without opportunities. Also, as Sarojini Naidu taunted the Mahatma, keeping Gandhiji in poverty was a costly affair. If today's journalists are better equipped than us, in all respects, it does not detract from the sincerity of their purpose. Most importantly, while careers in the military and business have to be 'sold' to those entering the employment market journalism is drawing adherents on it own. Reassuring undoubtedly.

Meanwhile, the *The Times of India* had an unusual editorial on the revelation of the mutual expulsion of High Commission personnel by the Governments of Pakistan and India practically on the eve of the resumption of foreign secretary-level talks between the two countries. It said: 'Though both countries had decided not to go public on the issue, it somehow appeared in a section of the Indian press followed by a more widely publicised disclosure in Pakistan. In much the same way as the paparazzi went after the late Princess Diana, there appears to be some amount of market-driven sensationalisation of news relating to Pakistan in this country and vice-versa in Pakistan.'

(Paradoxically, however, while the PTI report on the subject was matter-of-fact, without any frills, *The Times of India* story had a 'quote' from an unnamed 'senior external affairs ministry official' claiming that the incident reinforced 'our suspicion' that Pakistan was not sincere about improving bilateral ties and that 'probably international pressure' might be behind the resumption of officials' talks.)

To recapitulate the incident, according to the PTI report of September 14, India had asked Pakistan last month to withdraw two staff members of its High Commission for 'indulging in acts incompatible with their status.' Pakistan retaliated early this month by asking for withdrawal of two Indian High Commission personnel on a similar charge. At the same time, the two Governments agreed to keep the incidents under the wraps Then, in the words of a *The Hindu* report from its Islamabad correspondent, there was an 'inspired leak' in the Pakistan daily *The Nation* 'as a breach of an understanding not to take this incident to the media ' Whether, as alleged, a report in *The Indian Express* had started the process or *The Nation* set the ball rolling with the 'inspired leak', the authorities in both countries were naive to expect the expulsions to remain secret for long As it happened, the news of the expulsions broke on the same day the timetable for the next round of foreign secretary-level talks was announced

The purpose of ensuring that the atmosphere for the then forthcoming bilateral talks was not affected by the incident could have been better served if the expulsions had been delayed—the physical removal of the 'offending' personnel had not taken place until recently—or they should have been announced there and then in such a manner that they could be seen as isolated aberrations They happen even between more friendly countries In the India-Pakistan case, the risk of 'sensationalisation' is greater when facts are hidden from the public, more so in the context of opposition to normalisation of relations between the two countries, especially in Pakistan The media could be expected to observe restraints only when they are kept in the picture and not by news management In a way, it was healthy that the newspapers did not allow themselves to be conditioned by the governments to the extent of not disclosing the expulsions

The Tata Tea imbroglio also found the newspapers at the receiving end of blame, from the Union Home Minister himself Inderjit Gupta, by no means a media-basher, has faulted them for sensationalising the story First, it was not true that the Tata Group chairman, Ratan Tata, had met the Prime Minister when he visited Delhi for talks with the Home Minister and the Assam chief minister on the charge that Tata Tea had funded ULFA militants in the State Secondly, there was no basis for the report that the company had threatened to pull out of Assam Nor was it true that the Centre had asked the State authorities to drop the investigation of the case

The tendency to adorn the story has not, however, abated According to a Mumbai report in the *Free Press Journal*, Intelligence Bureau officials 'suspect' that hardcore ULFA terrorists 'had been carrying out dry runs for executing a terrorist attack' when the Prime Minister visited Mumbai for the 55th anniversary of Quit India Movement on August 9 last The 'dry runs' had been carried out in June last when the extremists were put up in a hotel not far from the venue of the function The tea company's Mumbai-based manager, Sridharan, was said to have footed the bill on behalf of the company The terrorists accompanied the ULFA cultural secretary whose confinement at Jaslok hospital had been reportedly financed by the company

Less directly, *The Economic Times* report suggests that Ajit Kerkar who was recently eased out by the Tatas as chairman of Indian Hotels Company, may have tipped off the Assam police about Tata Tea's alleged financial support to ULFA activists The report described it as an 'insinuation' denied by 'ex-Tata group honcho' (American slang for leader) Ajit Kerker

Finally, the following UNI report should get the cake more for the way it has been written than for breaking the news which is interesting Datelined Nagpur, it says that Laxmanrao Joshi, editor of *Tarun Bharat*, has stopped 'contributing to Arun Shourie's weekly column' as a protest against Shourie's tirade against Dr B R Ambedkar in the book It means that he stopped buying the column for the Marathi newspaper, the Nagpur edition of which is regarded as mouth-piece of the RSS ■

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PUBLISHERS

Rajwant Pal Singh
Editor, *Lal Parcham*
4A/3, Dhillon Marg
Model Town
Patiala-147001

Subhash Gatade
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F-5/79, LIG Flats
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Freedom implies not only emancipation from political bondage but also equal distribution of wealth, abolition of caste barriers and social inequities, and destruction of communalism and religious intolerance.

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CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS (SEPTEMBER 14-20, 1997)

NATIONAL

September 14 ➢ Five bogies of the Howrah-bound, Ahmedabad-Howrah Express derails and falls from a bridge into a river in Bilaspur district of Madhya Pradesh killing 81 persons and injuring another 400

➢ Assam Governor Lt General (Retd) S K Sinha says in New Delhi, funding of militant activities by any business house should be considered "anti-national act" and punished according to the laws of the land

➢ 25 persons including five Central Industrial Security Force personnel are killed and many others critically injured in a major fire at Vishakha Refinery at Visakhapatnam of the Hindustan Petroleum Corporation

➢ Bharatiya Janata Party and Bahujan Samaj Party resolve their differences and agree on a smooth transfer of Chief Ministership in Uttar Pradesh from Ms Mayawati (BSP) to Kalyan Singh (BJP) on September 21

September 15 ➢ The Prasar Bharati Act, granting autonomy to the All India Radio and Doordarshan comes into effect though the Union Information & Broadcasting Ministry will continue exercising control till the Board for the independent Broadcasting Corporation of India is constituted

➢ Tata Tea General Manager S Dogra is arrested in Guwahati for aiding and abetting the outlawed ULFA Chairman of the Tata Sons Ratan Tata meets Assam Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mohanta in New Delhi and assures him that action would be taken against executives found to have links with the ultras

➢ Congress Vice-President Jitendra Prasada, speaking to reporters in Lucknow, demands that Railway Minister Ram Vilas Paswan must resign for 500 accident have taken place since he took charge of the railways

September 16 ➢ India decides to throw open its two nuclear power reactors at Kakrapar (Gujarat) in November for inspection by members of the Tokyo-based World Association of Nuclear Operations

➢ Assam Chief Minister Mohanta says in New Delhi that Bangladesh opposition parties and army are helping the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) in re-establishing bases and training camps in the country

➢ Union Home Minister Indrajit Gupta says "Mr Tata said his group has never aided insurgents, either in cash or in kind I have no reason to disbelieve him I have no evidence against them"

➢ Special Judge VB Gupta discharges former Union Ministers K Natwar Singh, Arvind Netam, Harmohan Dhawan and L P Sahi, former Rajya Sabha member Ranjit Singh as also S K Jain B R Jain, N K Jain and their manager J K Jain in the Rs 65-crore *hawala* case saying 'there is no sufficient evidence on record to proceed against the accused"

➢ A division bench of Delhi High Court, on being told that Congress President Sitaram Kesri's monthly household expenditure was only Rs 1450 00, directs the CBI to inquire into all his household expenses including expenditure on servants and pets

September 17 ➢ Pakistan Foreign Secretary Shamshad Ahmad arrives in New Delhi for the second round of foreign secretary level talks He calls on Prime Minister Gujral and after the talks with his Indian counterpart K Raghunath, issues a statement saying "the substantive parts was with the Prime Minister and Mr Sherwani During these meetings, I had the opportunity of presenting our viewpoint on various aspects of the dialogue"

➢ A group of 16 men, 16 women and 38 boys in the age group of four to eight years from Bangladesh are detained at Kelambakkam, 35 km from Chennai suspecting that the boys were being smuggled to the Gulf countries for camel racing

➢ Vishwa Hindu Parishad Working President Ashok Singhal says at Gorakhpur, UP, the Parishad would soon launch a cow protection movement all over the country

➢ CPI (M), in a Politburo statement, says cuts in the plan and non-plan expenditure to raise additional resources would "adversely affect the meagre expenditure on the social welfare schemes" and hurt the livelihood of the vast mass of Indian people The Union Government move has been similarly criticised by D Raja, of the CPI

➢ Suzuki Motor Corporation issue a veiled warning to the Union Industry Ministry, saying that continued confrontation between the two joint-venture 50 50 partners in Maruti Udyog Ltd over the appointment of R S S L N Bhaskarudu as Managing Director, could result in MUL "losing out"

September 18 ➢ Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral leaves for a nine-day foreign tour and arrives in Dar-es-Salam, the Capital of Tanzania to a ceremonial welcome

➢ India-Pakistan foreign secretary-level talks in New Delhi end in a deadlock with Pakistan insisting on making Kashmir the core issue of any dialogue

➢ Suzuki Motor Corporation moves the Delhi High Court to get a stay on the appointment of R S S L N Bhaskarudu as Managing Director of the joint venture Maruti Udyog Ltd

➢ CPI (M), CPI, RSP and Forward Bloc ask the Union Government to revise its decision to hike sugar prices in the public distribution system

September 19 ➢ Firing from across the Line of Control in Jammu & Kashmir kills 11 civilians and injure 14 in Arin Village outside Bandipore town

➢ Leader of the Opposition Atal Behari Vajpayee says in Bilaspur it is not in the interests of the country to initiate foreign secretary level talks with Pakistan at this time

➢ Surendra Singla, M P and PM Sayeed, M P, after their visit to Assam, sent by the Congress on a fact finding mission, say in new Delhi, the Corporate giant Tata are being "singled out and harassed"

September 20 ➢ U P Chief Minister Ms Mayawati (BSP) resigns to clear the way for Kalyan Singh led BJP government to take over the reins of power in the state for the next six months She promises a free hand to Kalyan Singh

➢ Finance Minister P Chidambaram, in Hong Kong for a World Bank-IMF meeting, tells a Seminar that the Government will re-introduce the Insurance Bill in the Parliament and open up the pension funds

TERNATIONAL

ember 14 ➢ Communist Party Chief of the Southern China boomtown Shenzhen Li Youwei warns delegates to the 15th Congress of the CPC that it was not possible to find, from what Deng Xiaoping said before, readymade answers to all our questions

➢ More than 20,000 Israelis fill the centre of Tel Aviv to mark the fourth anniversary of the Oslo accord and denounce Prime Minister Netanyahu for destroying the peace process

➢ US President Clinton, in his weeks radio address, declares that urges Congress to enact legislation at the earliest on the campaign finance system as the "amount of money raised by both political parties doubles every four years and the candidates spend more and more time raising more and more money

tember 15 ➢ Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pakistan Sajjad Ali Shah delivers his 229-page judgement to pronounce that President Farooq Ahmad Leghari was justified in dismissing Benazir Bhutto's Government on November 5, 1996

➢ Afghanistan's Taliban forces accuse Russia of supplying rockets to opposition leader Ahmad Shah Masood The charge is categorically denied by Masood who was Soviet Army's most formidable opponent in the 80s

➢ Sri Lanka President Chandrika Kumaratunga arrives at Kuala Lumpur on a four day state visit to Malaysia

➢ Zbigniew Brzezinski, one-time National Security Advisor to former US President Jimmy Carter (1977-80) writes in the 75th Anniversary issue of *Foreign Affairs*, "China's support to Pakistan is necessary to contain India"

➢ Women's Group of the African National Congress nominates Winnie Mandela for the post of the Deputy Chief of the ANC, putting her in a position to contest the election for the post of Deputy President of South Africa in 1999 inspite of her alleged role in two deaths

tember 16 ➢ British Prime Minister Tony Blair's office confirms that he would draw a full salary of £ 143,860 next year, signifying an increase of £ 41,443 over the last year, despite a pay freeze for public sector workers Cabinet members will receive £ 103,860

➢ Pakistani Minister for Law and Justice says the anti-corruption unit possessed several "original documents" and he has "no doubts the documents are genuine" to prove that funds deposited in the name of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and her family in Swiss bank accounts belong to the people of Pakistan

➢ A 180-kg van bomb explodes near a police station in the Irish border town markethil, leaving a five-metre crater and causing widespread damage It is suspected to be the handiwork of IRA

➢ UN General Assembly's 52nd session is opened by President Hennadiy Udovenko (Ukraine) reminding the 185 member states that "the success of reform now depends on their political wisdom and their will to act promptly, constructively and decisively"

tember 17 ➢ Italian Foreign Minister Lamberto Dini calls the US proposal to give Germany and Japan and three developing countries permanent seats in the UN Security Council a "diminishing of Italy" and declares it is unacceptable to our parliament, our government and the public"

➢ Northern Ireland's key pro-British Unionist Party says it would join the peace talks to counter the presence of Sinn Fein

➢ Sher Mohammad Stanekzai, the Deputy Foreign Minister of Afghanistan's Taliban forces, says their delegation called on Saudi King Fahd, requesting him to help them in getting Afghanistan's seat in the UN and the Organisation of Islamic Countries The King promised them to ask his foreign minister to use his authority in the matter

tember 18 ➢ CIA (The Central News Agency of United States of America) victory in the cold war, world's first spy satellites, detection of Soviet missiles in Cuba and taking a second look at assassination plots, botched invasions, over-smart moles

➢ Executive Secretary of the CPC Committee of the Tibet Autonomous region Raidi addresses a press conference at the close of the 15th Congress of the Communist Party of China in Beijing to say that the Dalai Lama would the welcome to Tibet only if he renounces his pursuit for Tibet's independence

➢ Jiang Zemin is re-elected Chief of the Communist Party of China while Qiao Shi, Chairman of China's Parliament and Liu Huaqing, the army's top representative did not make to the Central Committee, which is seen by observes as triumph for Jiang

➢ US Assistant Secretary of State for International Affairs Princeton Lyman says in Washington that the focus during Clinton-Gujral meeting on September 22 will be on US-India relations and not on India - Pakistan relations but other issues will also come up during the talks

➢ Nepal's senior leader of the Nepali Congress Ganesh Mansingh, 84, dies of a heart attack in Kathmandu

➢ Wales in a referendum says "yes" to a Labour Government proposal for a Wales Assembly of 60 members to open in 2000 A D

ptember 19 ➢ Gen K M Arif (Retd), Vice-Chief of the Pakistan Army (1984-87) says in Colombo that India and Pakistan were very close to war in 1987 at the time of the Exercise brasstacks close to the border with Pakistan but they never considered using their nuclear option

➢ A UN Special Missions report reveals that Taliban fighters captured by their Northern Allian opponents and interviewed at Maimana and Bamyan admitted that they came various parts of Pakistan

ptember 20 ➢ The Pakistani police files another murder case against Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto's husband Asif Ali Zardari and alongwith him implicates his father Hakim Ali Zardari in the killing of Alam Baluch, former Federal Secretary

➢ Indian TV journalist Ruchira Gupta wins the "News and Documentary" Emmys for her 1996 film *The Selling of Innocents*, tracing the flesh trade originating in the sale of girls in Nepal who end up in brothels of Mumbai ■

Posted at CPSO in New Delhi on September 26/27, 1997 **Delhi Postal REGD No DL-1103**

Licence No U-(C)-20/97 Licensed to Post without Prepayment Regd with Registrar of Newspapers of India under No RN 7064

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Edited and published by Sumit Chakravartty *for* PERSPECTIVE PUBLICATIONS PRIVATE LTD, 1E/12, "Sewak House" (First Floor), Jhandewalan Extension, New Delhi-110055 Tel 7516763, 7516893 *Printed at* NEW DELHI PRINTERS, 20/7 Old Market, West Patel Nagar, New Delhi-110008 *Editor* Sumit Chakravartty *Editorial Adviser* Nikhil Chakravartty *General Manager* Praveen Mehta *Executive Manager* Jasjit Kay Nagra

Mainstream

VOL XXXV No 43 October 4,1997 Rs 7

Success of IRS-1D Launch : Milestone in Self-Reliant Advance

S.K. SINGH

Panchayats for Scheduled Areas

AMMU JOSEPH

Press in India Today : Priorities and Preoccupations

Partition of India

Document : Towards Indo-Pak Unity

Tanzanian President on Consolidating Indo-Tanzanian Relations

SUMIT CHAKRAVARTTY'S WRITE-UP—"GUJRAL VISIT HERALDS NEW TURN IN INDO-US TIES : DISSECTING THE MEANING OF 'ENGAGEMENT'"

EDITORIAL

Milestone in Self-Reliant Advance

With the textbook-style launch of the 1200 kilogram Indian remote sensing satellite IRS-1D into the sunsynchronous orbit following the blast-off of the 44 4 metre tall, 294-tonne PSLV-C1, the country's first indigenous polar satellite launch vehicle, from the Sriharikota range (SHAR) a new chapter has unfolded in the annals of India's space odyssey As is well known, only four countries—the US, Russia, France and Israel—hitherto possessed the capacity to launch 1000 kilogram class satellites into space Now India has entered that group by the sheer strength of its self-reliant advance in space technology, the success of the mission on September 29 having ended the Indian Space Research Organisation's dependence on the Russian and French Ariane vehicles to launch IRS satellites This achievement in the fiftieth anniversary of our freedom is of exceptional significance especially because our space scientists have had to overcome the severest of odds—manifest in the denial of vital technology by the developed nations, notably the US—to attain this feat

The Prime Minister has characterised this historic launch as the "biggest homage on the occasion of the golden jubilee of India's independence", while our scholar-President has conveyed the genuine sentiment of the country as a whole by underscoring that

> India is proud of her scientists who have demonstrated our capabilities as one of the select countries in the world actively engaged in the frontier areas of space technology

No doubt this development reinforces our independence and strengthens our sovereignty now under threat from vested interests both at home and abroad However, this achievement would not have been possible but for the policies pursued by the successive Indian Governments that carried forward the strategy of the country's peaceful, self-reliant progress fashioned in the domestic political, economic and social spheres as well as the international arena by no less a person than the architect of modern India, Jawaharlal Nehru At the same time it is also necessary to underline that without the vision of that undisputed father-figure of our national movement, the immortal Mahatma Gandhi, who literally moved the millions in history's most remarkable non-violent mass upsurge to end the ignominy of alien rule on our sacred soil, the successes of independent India would not have been possible It is most appropriate that the latest feather in the cap of our scientific community has come on the eve of the one hundred and twentyeighth anniversary of Gandhiji's birth

In the light of this success the Prime Minister has done well to openly tell the US to revise its policy of embargo on supply of technology to India in the interest of cordial relations between the two states Only 24 hours before the PSLV blast-off he had complained, at the twentythird conference of the Directors of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), that certain advanced countries were not merely depriving India of critical technologies but also going out of their way to prevent others from doing so Obviously he was alluding to the manner in which Washington had sought to twist Moscow's arm on the issue of supply of cryogenic engines to India, something which evoked a strong negative reaction within Russia itself Now with the successful IRS-1D launch Gujral's criticism assumes more weight and substance

Indeed this landmark in the history of our space technology—constituting a trail-blazer for the developing world—is the clearest vindication of what I K Gujra observed after viewing the blast-off at Sriharikota

> Our scientists have the spirit to turn every challenge into an opportunity

Without reservation these scientists deserve the hearties compliments of a grateful nation on the threshold o entering the twentyfirst century Amidst the depressing goings-on in the political field and the mounting disparities accompanying the 'globalised' economic reforms, it is they who have provided a new source of inspiration to us—the inspiration to ensure our self-reliant progress regardless o the adversities facing the country In the process they have not only enhanced our stature and standing in the world at large but also deepened our resolve to surmount the obstacles that still impede our movement towards a radian future

September 30

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GUJRAL VISIT HERALDS NEW TURN IN INDO-US TIES

Dissecting the Meaning of 'Engagement'

SUMIT CHAKRAVARTTY

Seldom has any visit by a Prime Minister of India to the US been plagued by such a controversy Inder Kumar Gujral's four-day trip to New York (September 20-24, 1997) was a subject matter of debate from the time his programme had to be rescheduled following the invitation from President Clinton for a meeting with him in New York at the time of the opening of the fiftysecond session of the UN General Assembly (September 22) While critics saw in the readjustment of the dates (originally Gujral had planned to be in New York around September 27 for addressing the General Asembly session) a clear evidence of kowtowing to the sole surviving superpower by a weak-kneed PM throwing to the winds national sovereignty, some of those favouring closer understanding and cooperation with the US were of the considered view that India should not suffer from "ego hassles" when dealing with the White House While quite a few apprehended a sell-out of Indian interests during the visit, others opined that when a good opportunity to evolve a new type of relationship with Washington—unburdened by past legacy—had unfolded accompanied by a distinct shift in the US approach towards India (epitomised by the attitudinal changes brought about following the changeover from Robin Raphel to Karl Inderfurth in the handling of South Asian issues in the State Department), to lose that chance would be the height of fallacy [Of course, the confusion with regard to the change of timing of the visit originated from the PMO itself since initially Gujral's reaction to altering his programme was negative before he took a different posture and accepted the invitation]

It is in this backdrop that one has to dispassionately analyse the success or failure of the visit without giving quarter to any sense of either euphoria or despondency And if one is able to adopt an objecjtive view of Indo-US relations at this particular juncture, one would dare say that the Prime Minister's first major foreign tour turned out to be a visit of substance with the high point of the trip—Gujral's 40-minute official level talks with Clinton—being aptly summed up by a senior US State Department official as a "promising start to greater engagement with India" for the purpose of evolving a "more normal, long range, sustainable" relationship

◆

THE buzzword in the US today is 'engagement' Thus the Report of the Independent Task Force (sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations and published early this year), "A New US Policy Toward India and Pakistan"—which has laid the foundation for the shift in the US stance vis-a-vis South Asia—observes quite openly in its Executive Summary

> During the last few years, US policy toward India and Pakistan has focussed primarily on deterring and reversing the nuclear weaponisation of the subcontinent
>
> Despite US non-proliferation efforts, both India and Pakistan have become de facto nuclear weapons-capable states and show no sign of changing course Such behaviour has triggered US sanctions, which in turn have constricted US bilateral relationships with both countries This is unfortunate, because the current situation calls for more, rather than less, US engagement

And on the same lines our Prime Minister too made generous use of the term while presenting, at the breakfast meeting with the Council on Foreign Relations on September 23, an idea of the nature of the Indo-US summit in New York

> I had a most constructive meeting with President Clinton yesterday afternoon As the world's largest and oldest democracies, we share certain basic beliefs, as in the Rule of Law and in the essential, inviolate and equal dignity of all human beings An active engagement between us can only serve the interests of peace, stability and maintenance of mankind's democratic rights and freedoms in an increasingly uncertain world

According to the senior US State Department official, during the Clinton-Gujral talks the US President wanted greater cooperation with India on nuclear disarmament Gujral, he said, reiterated the Indian position on the CTBT, but, more importantly in the US spokesman's view, Gujral had unambiguously stated that "we will be pleased to engage you (the US) in discussions" to that end "This is exactly what we wanted it to be," the highranking State Department official averred

The phrase 'constructive engagement' was used by the US in relation to China sometime ago and in the Chinese context it still holds currency It means continuing dialogue with the adversary so as to preclude any concrete confrontationist action from the latter's side. The phrase was also employed by the ASEAN member-states keen on doing business with the military junta in Myanmar (Burma). In the Indo-US framework the word 'engagement' means that the two sides (the US and India) want to engage in discussions on vital issues on which there are sharp differences so as to prevent those differences from assuming a hostile confrontationist dimension. This is the objective the US has in both the cases (China and India), although in Beijing Washington seeks to bring about a systemic change as well. India too is keen on engaging the US in debates on issues of glaring differences so that it is able to prove the correctness, efficacy and justification of the course it has adopted on, say, the CTBT, even if the stand completely isolated New Delhi in the global arena.

Incidentally, the principal strategy of Pakistan today is to engage India on bilateral issues, particularly Kashmir. Thus after his 40-minute talks with Gujral on September 23 (wherein no progress was made in terms of breaking the deadlock on the methodology to discuss Kashmir in the Foreign Secretary level talks, and India declined to respond to the two main proposals advanced by Nawaz Sharif in his UN speech the preceding day, that is, the treaty of non-aggression, and troop withdrawal from Kashmir) the Pakistan PM told journalists accompanying him that having failed to wrest Kashmir militarily through the three wars of 1948, 1965 and 1971, Islamabad had now one purpose—to engage India on Kashmir in as concerted a manner as possible.

◆

THE latest US policy towards South Asia found reflection in Clinton's UN speech on September 22. Asserting that "trouble in a far corner can become a plague on everyone's house", he said:

> People the world over cheered the hopeful developments in Northern Ireland, grieved over the innocent loss of life and the stalling of the peace process in the Middle East, and longed for a resolution of the differences on the Korean Peninsula, or between Greece and Turkey, or between the great nations of India and Pakistan as they celebrate the fiftieth anniversaries of their birth.

Now in his second term in office, Clinton (who first won the US Presidency on a domestic agenda of social contract and had a limited perspective on foreign affairs) is keen to see that he goes down on record as the real global peace-broker who defused the existing and potential flash-points in different corners of this earth. Hence his urge for "resolution of differences, *inter alia*, among India and Pakistan. The prefix 'great nations' was added keeping in view the sensitivities of the two countries and in a transparent bid to placate them. [However, the speech placed the two states (India and Pakistan) at par by referring to the 'fiftieth anniversaries of their birth'. After all, India—unlike Pakistan—was not born in 1947! But this is a minor point which need not be overstressed.]

In fact well aware of the discomfort that Gujral had to domestically undergo when he adjusted his programme of coming to New York and meeting the US President to suit the latter's convenience, Clinton began his 40-minute talks with the Indian Premier by expressing his appreciation for Gujral's change of schedule which, he pointed out, was "not the easiest thing to do". This amounted to bending over backwards to bail Gujral out of an awkward situation.

From the Indian standpoint this was a definite positive signal. More significantly, it was manifested also in the unequivocal US dismissal of any proposal for mediation between India and Pakistan to resolve their differences over Kashmir in particular. This was conveyed to Pakistan in no uncertain terms although one should not infer from this that the USA is giving up its backing of Pakistan, the trusted ally of Washington since the early days of the Cold War. Successive US statements do not convey that idea in any form or shape. Moreover, even while declining to mediate between India and Pakistan on Kashmir the US has not withdrawn its proposal of extending its good offices for assistance to settle the Kashmir problem. Thus Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had no hesitation in saying in his speech at the General Assembly:

> The international community has a responsibility to bring about a just settlement of the Kashmir dispute. The pledge of self-determination given to the people of Jammu and Kashmir has to be redeemed. On our part, we welcome the offers made by the UN Secretary-General, United States and others to help in resolving the Kashmir dispute.

It is noteworthy that neither the UN Secretary-General nor the US has withdrawn the offer to "help in resolving the Kashmir dispute" he/it had extended earlier.

As has been mentioned above, the Independent Task Force Report constitutes the basis of the current shift in the US attitude towards India in particular from a confrontationist course (aimed at browbeating this country into submission) to one of engagement. That Report in its findings and recommendations with regard to Kashmir points out that a majority of the members of the Task Force favour "working with other governments on a step-by-step approach towards a series of practical interim objectives" as the best means to serve US interests in both India and Pakistan At the same time it underscores

> The United States, in concert with other governments, should seek to lower tension and violence, reduce military forces, and restore political normalcy in Kashmir Pakistan should be urged to end direct and indirect military support to Kashmiri insurgent organisations And India should be urged to continue and accelerate moves to resurrect the political process in Kashmir, including grants of amnesty for those insurgents willing to abjure violence, punishment for those members of the security forces involved in human rights violations, and conduct of discussions with the newly elected Kashmiri government about the degree of autonomy for the State within the Indian Constitution

Of course, this is a balancing act There is also an effort to respond to Indian sensitivities by emphasising on bilateralism in place of multilateralism And yet it does indicate the US' prodding, howsoever genteel, of both India and Pakistan for the purpose of initiating concrete steps to settle the problem

True, the Task Force Report is not a document of the US Government It has been categorically stated in the booklet embodying the Report that the "Council on Foreign Relations takes no institutional position on policy issues and has no affiliation with the US Government" Furthermore, there have been dissenting views from several distinguished Task Force members and these are carried at the end of the Report They include among others Francine R Frankel, Selig S Harrison and Stephen Solarz But there is no denying that the basic thrust and tenor of the Report has been instrumental in bringing about the change in the US policy towards South Asia, with special reference to India As the Executive Summary explains,

> Together (conclusions and additional as well as dissenting views—S C) the recommendations of the Task Force constitute a bold new US approach toward India and Pakistan, one that could be reinforced by working in parallel with European and Asian governments

Doesn't this smack of too much interest by outside forces, if not powers, in what is exclusively to be regarded as the domain of South Asian states?

Be that as it may there is another aspect of the Report which merits serious consideration According to the document (which maintains that the "time is ripe for the United States to propose a closer strategic relationship with India, which has the potential to emerge as a full-fledged major power" and feels that the "relationship should be based on shared values and institutions, economic collaboration including enhanced trade and investment, and the goal of regional stability across Asia"),

> A strong and friendly India could become a valuable partner for the United States in the years ahead, one that could help maintain stability and prosperity through Asia Similarly, a moderate and democratic Pakistan could help promote stability in the Islamic world South Asia's military power represents an important element to be weighed in calculating military balances across Asia and the Middle East

Herein lie the rudiments of Indo-US strategic understanding against China that has been peddled lately in certain influential segments of the Indian media While this aspect of the evolving Indo-US relationship should not be overlooked, it is imprudent to publicly announce this from the rooftop as that runs the risk of evoking instant Chinese hostilities not necessarily in words but most definitely in deed

But Pakistan is not being foresaken in the least The Report does declare

> The new policy would enable the United States to explore the possibility of a significantly closer bilateral relationship with India than has previously been the case—a development most members of the Task Force believe is in order, given their view that there has been and will continue to be a growing convergence of US and Indian geopolitical and economic interests

Yet in the same breath it proclaims

> Explaining the possibilities for progress in US-Indian relations would not mean, however, diminishing US relations with Pakistan To the contrary, appropriate opportunities for enhanced US-Pakistani cooperation should be pursued energetically on their own terms It is both possible and desirable to move towards delinking the US' bilateral relationships with India and Pakistan and attempting to transcend the zero-sum dynamics that have plagued the region (and US policy toward the region)

Any comment on or elucidation of this proclamation is superfluous (No wonder while briefing the Pakistani press on his talks with Clinton, Nawaz Sharif claimed that Washington's commitment to stand by Islamabad was never as strong as today)

It is this perspective that has to be borne in mind while trying to analyse the US leaders' statements regarding India

Coming back to the Clinton-Gujral talks, it needs to be pointed out that, according to the State Department spokesman the two leaders "tried to address all difficult issues and the Kashmir issue is one of those The problem of Kashmir did not figure in the manner it had in the past but it came up as a part of the exercise of envisioning a future not tied to the problems of the past'

There is no denying the fact that there is a new turn in Indo-US relations This was reflected in several ways at the Clinton-Gujral meeting The President spoke of the "great feeling for India in the US" and lamented that "we have let too many opportunities go by" in cementing Indo-US ties and placing it on a sounder footing He spoke of closer economic cooperation in the light of Finance Minister P Chidambaram's exposition of Indo-US relations in the sphere of investments and trade He also commended the Gujral Doctrine and its efficacy in resolving problems with Bangladesh and Nepal, and approved India's efforts to put the Indo-Pak problems behind But most significantly he declared

> We are very careful not to interfere in Indo-Pak issues

These highlights of the Clinton-Gujral meeting were of substantive value and not overshadowed by persisting differences on the CTBT which the PM spelt out in a 'factual' manner without any 'confrontationist' overtone

◆

LET us now turn to Gujral's public speeches in New York In all the three addresses—at the breakfast meeting with the Council on Foreign Relations on September 23, at the evening function organised by the Asia Society on the same day and at the UN General Assembly in the morning of September 24—he went out of his way to clarify the Indian position on the nuclear question

This was more than necessary on account of President Clinton's announcement that he was going ahead with steps to ratify forthwith the CTBT and sought cooperation of all (which specifically meant India, the sole genuine opponent of the Treaty) to put it into force at the earliest

Thus at the first gathering he explained

> The initiative for banning nuclear tests comprehensively is a four decade-old Indian initiative However, we were obliged to refrain from signing the CTBT as it emerged in 1996 Likewise we have not signed the NPT because it is a Treaty that makes an arbitrary and discriminatory distinction amongst nations Moreover, these Treaties, in their present form, do not address our security concerns in creating forward movement towards a nuclear weapons-free world but tend instead, to perpetuate a discriminatory nuclear order Now, with the end of the Cold War, the role and utility of nuclear weapons is being reconsidered even in the United States Many distinguished Americans have in recent months highlighted the diminishing utility of nuclear weapons and the need to do away with them in order to prevent future proliferation and enhance global security This welcome development could provide our two countries an opportunity to work together in an area where understanding has so far eluded us
>
> Our peaceful nuclear experiment in 1974 has not been followed by any subsequent test We have scrupulously refrained from weaponisation This voluntary restraint is unique in the nuclear age However, we are also surrounded by nuclear weapons and we cannot remain indifferent to the threat posed to our seucirty We do not wish to be a nuclear weapons state, but, in the present circumstances, the need to keep our nuclear option open is unavoidable

At the Asia Society function he said

> *An essential part of our vision is the creation of a nuclear weapons-free world,* and we hope that this will become a reality in the twentyfirst century, if not even earlier Some people, I know, doubt our faith in such a hope, for they are convinced that India has a nuclear bomb in its basement When misperception is married to prejudice, and the offspring of both is hostility, it is difficult for the truth to prevail The truth is that India was among the first countries since the 1950s to advance the cause of a nuclear weapons-free world We have consistently demanded the halting of all nuclear tests We welcomed the Partial Test Ban Treaty as a first step towards a comprehensive ban on underground tests *For us, a nuclear weapons-free planet is an article of faith* and we have called for a global elimination of all nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework We undertook a peaceful nuclear explosion as far back as 1974, but have scrupulously refrained from weaponisation We have not tested after that, while the total number of tests by the nuclear weapons powers has, I believe, been in the vicinity of 2400 India did not sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty because of its inherent flaws, which legitimise the possession of nuclear weapons by a few countries while denying them to others But India has observed the provisions of the NPT even while remaining out of it We have not openly, or in a clandestine manner, helped the process of proliferation Others have, including some of the major nuclear powers When the question of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty was being discussed, we made it clear that we would not accept the Draft unless it contains a pledge by the nuclear powers that they would proceed towards complete nuclear disamament within a reasonable time-frame Our views did not get any response leaving us no option but to decline from signing the Treaty in its present form
>
> We are, of course, dubbed unreasonable, but in matters where both our interests and principles are concerned, we had to uphold our point of view I am reminded, in this context, of a rather pertinent remark by George Bernard Shaw "The reasonable man adapts himself to the world the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man "
>
> I may also point out that India's commitment to nuclear disarmament has persisted even when the strategic situation around us remains a matter of deep concern We are surrounded by nuclear weapons In the East, there is China, a full-fledged nuclear power In the South, there is Diego Garcia, a major American nuclear base In the West, the Gulf region has been nuclearised by alien powers And to the North, the world is aware of Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme which led President Bush to withhold certification as required under the Pressler Amendment In such a situation, Indian security concerns should be understandable May I repeat what I had told this august body last year, that we have no desire to go nuclear unless we are forced to The truth is that we cannot give up our nuclear option unless the world around us is made nuclear weapons-free
>
> I would like to add that whenever a global initiative on disarmament has been genuinely non-discriminatory, India has been among the first countries in the world to support it I have in mind the Chemical Weapons Convention, where we participated actively in the decade-long negotiations and, in keeping with our declared commitment, became an Original State Party In fact, India was elected unopposed as the first Chairman of the Executive Council of the Organisation for Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

And at the UN General Assembly he wove the Indian stand into the objectives and principles of the United Nations

> The pretexts for clinging to nuclear arsenals, which were questionable at any time, have now vanished. Mere non-proliferation treaties, promoted as disarmament measures, only serve to entrench a nuclear monopoly. No credible steps towards striving to realise a nuclear weapons-free world are contemplated, much less taken, by those who should be showing the way. No justifications can be proferred as during the Cold War. The patience of the world community—expressed through the International Court of Justice, enlightened voices from former believers of deterrence, political and general opinion, and weighty voluntary initiatives—is starting to wear thin. Nuclear weapons powers owe it to the world to answer the question why they need nuclear weapons. Global opinion wants a Nuclear Weapons Convention, as already outlined for the class of biological and chemical weapons, and will not rest till it is achieved. We appeal to nuclear weapons states to align their poicies to what the world wants. We see the United Nations as the forum in which the international community must continue to demand universal nuclear disarmament, and we expect therefore that the Secretariat's programmes will support this inter-governmental objective.

The three speeches spelt out India's considered views on various issues based on its national interests and explained the steps lately taken to improve relations with its neighbours. But one wondered if the PM's policy of completely ignoring Pakistan was prudent in the long run. One need not be Pakistan-centric and the PM's approach on this score is unassailable. But why should that lead to total black-out of even the ongoing dialogue with Pakistan whose importance in scaling down the level of tension and confrontation is indeed invaluable?

The reasons behind India's efforts to secure permanent membership of the UN Security Council were also spelt out in some detail in the speeches (although for obvious reasons this issue was not raised at the meeting the PM had with the US head of state).

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OVERALL then Gujral's visit to New York has helped to get a clearer perception of what the US now intends to do in South Asia and how India's importance has grown in its calculations regardless of the Washington-Islamabad special relationship (whose retention must be acknowledged as a noteworthy feature of the US approach in our part of the world at present). Though Gujral declined to publicly comment on the subject, there is a definite shift in the US stand towards India. This shift—with the purpose of befriending India through increasing engagement—has been brought about as a result of various factors including those in the realm of the economy like brighter prospects for investment in India. However, if it is politics and strategy which drive the economy and not vice-versa, then another factor cannot be lost sight of: India's firm and unequivocal position against the palpably discriminatory CTBT regime, something which compelled the US to realise that coercive diplomacy through such moves as the Entry-into-Force clause will not help to browbeat India into submission. Needless to underline, the significance of this development cannot be overestimated.

When Clinton undertakes his voyage of discovery to India in early 1998 this change in the US perception might well get more pronounced and acquire a durable character. However, judging by the past experience of US approach to the developing world, not to speak of the vicissitudes in Indo-US relations (both the trips of Rajiv Gandhi and Narasimha Rao to the US in 1985 and 1994 respectively were billed as substantive successes but they failed to leave a lasting impress), one should be highly cautious in giving a clear-cut verdict on both the durability of the shift as well as the Gujral visit's outcome. [According to well-placed analysts of the US policy in South Asia, there are differing views within the US Administration on the attitude towards India: while Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Assistant Secretary for South Asia Karl Inderfurth advocate a firm stance, National Security Adviser Samuel Berger and Under Secretary for Political Affairs Thomas Pickering favour a softer line.] From the Indian standpoint it must be realised that 'engagement' implies a short-term approach, not a long range strategy. Nonetheless, one only hopes that anchored in the spirit of realism—that Gujral displayed in abundance during his tenure as the Minister of External Affairs (and which he has yet to effectively demonstrate following his assumption of the Prime Minister's Office)—the policy of enhanced engagement of the US could pay considerable dividend in the coming days provided we do not lose our bearings and are not swept off our feet by the change in the US attitude towards us. This change need not be as benign as it appears to be and could well turn out to be tactical intended to inveigle India into its own policy framework to the detriment of our independent action and thinking.

While welcoming the present public posture of the US Administration vis-a-vis India one should be careful not to rule out such possibilities so as to preclude getting entrapped in the new game the US has launched in South Asia. Some of Gujral's public pronouncements in New York are a reflection of the maturity with which he is trying to respond to the complexities accompanying this new reality without jettisoning our fundamental national interests. ■

Panchayats for Scheduled Areas

S K SINGH

This paper analyses the recent enactment of 1996, extending the provisions of Part IX of the Constitution relating to the Panchayats to the Scheduled Areas It also highlights the unique features of the extended Act and examines the implications impinging upon the new dispensation of the Panchayats in the tribal areas, and its variation from other areas As the Act has direct bearing upon local governance for millions of tribal population in the country, it is essential to discuss in detail various provisions of the Act and how they will shape achievement of its objectives

Article 243M of the Constitution prohibits extension of provisions of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment to tribal areas and Scheduled Areas referred in Article 244 Clause (1) and (2) But, Article 243 M 4(b) empowers Parliament to make laws to extend the provisions of the Act subject to certain conditions Obviously, these areas have been treated on a different footing as compared to other parts of the country Keeping in view the judicial verdicts that automatic extension of the Panchayati Raj Act to tribal areas is unconstitutional and demands made by tribal leaders, a need was felt for extending the provisions of Part IX of the Constitution to the Scheduled Areas A High Level Committee was constituted by the government to make recommendations on the subject The High Level Committee, which is known as Bhuria Committee, held discussions and examined issues pertaining to references made thereon, and made certain recommendations as to how the Scheduled Areas could be covered under the provisions of the 73rd Amendment Accordingly, a Bill was introduced in the Parliament and passed on December 19, 1996 and subsequently President's assent was accorded on December 24, 1996 to make it a part of the Constitution

This Act will now be applicable to the Scheduled Areas as referred to in the Clause (1) of Article 244 of the Constitution, whereas it is not applicable to the areas covered under the Sixth Schedule under the provisions of Article 244 (2) As a sequel to this, all existing provisions of law relating to Panchayats in the Scheduled Areas shall have to be amended as per the provisions of this Act within one year that is, by December 24, 1997 Also, all existing Panchayats shall continue till the date of expiration unless it is dissolved by the competent authority (Legislative Assembly) and new bodies will be constituted on the lines of the provisions of this Act

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Distinct Features

THE extended Act has some outstanding features Among them, the Gram Sabha has been made nucleus of all activities and endowed with specific powers and functions which does not figure in the main provisions of Part IX The mandatory provisions of extended Act are

A) Any legislation on the Panchayats for the tribal areas shall be in consonance with the customary law, social and religious practices, and traditional management practices of community resources,

B) A village has been defined as a habitation or a group of habitations or a hamlet or a group of hamlets of a community who are managing their affairs as per the traditions and customs Since the tribal settlements are scattered and they live in small units, each unit can be declared as a village for this purpose,

C) Establishment of Gram Sabha for every village comprising persons whose names figure in the electoral rolls of the Village Panchayat,

D) Empowering Gram Sabha to safeguard and preserve the traditions, customs and cultural identity of the people, community resources, and settling local disputes through customary methods,

E) Approval of plans, programmes and projects for social and economic development of the Village Panchayat by the Gram Sabha,

F) Gram Sabha to identify and select beneficiaries for poverty alleviation and other programmes,

G) Every Village Panchayat has to obtain a certificate of utilisation of funds from the Gram Sabha for the Projects and Programmes of social and economic development, poverty alleviations and other programmes,

H) The acquisition of land for development projects and rehabilitation or resettlement of persons affected by such projects in the Scheduled Area has to be done in consultation with either Gram Sabha or the Panchayats at the appropriate level Planning and implementation of the Projects will be co-ordinated at the State level,

I) Panchayats at the appropriate level has to manage and plan for minor water bodies in these areas,

J) Grant of prospecting licence of mining lease for minor minerals has to be given on the recommendations of the Gram Sabha or the Panchayats at the appropriate level,

K) Grant of concessions for the exploitation of minor minerals by auction has to be given on the recommendations of the Gram Sabha or the Panchayats at the appropriate level,

L) Besides these powers and functions, the Gram Sabha or the Panchayats at the appropriate level shall have the following mandatory powers

i) Enforce prohibition or to regulate or restrict the sale and consumption of any intoxicant,

ii) the ownership of minor forest produce and to manage all types of village markets,

iii) To prevent alienation of land and to take appropriate action to restore any unlawfully alienated land of a Scheduled Tribe in the Scheduled Areas,

iv) Exercise control over money lending to tribes, and control institutions and functionaries working in the social sectors in the area,

v) Control over local plans and its resources including tribal sub-plans,

M) Reservation of seats at all tiers of Panchayats for the Scheduled Tribes shall not be less than one-half of the total number of seats, and reservation for other communities indicated in the Part IX of the Constitution shall be on the basis of proportion to the population of those communities,

N) The Chairperson of all levels of the Panchayats shall be reserved for the Scheduled Tribes,

O) At the intermediate or district level Panchayat, in the case of Schedule Tribes which have no representation, the State Government shall nominate such unrepresented Scheduled Tribes but such nominations should not exceed one-tenth of the total elected members in the Panchayat,

P) While devolving powers and authority to Panchayats to enable them to function as institutions of self-government, it should be ensured that Panchayats at the higher level do not assume the powers and authority of any lower level Panchayat or the Gram Sabha,

Q) The pattern of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution has to be maintained while designing the administrative arrangements for the district level Panchayat

Major Spin-offs from the Act

It is obvious that the new dispensation of Panchayats in the Scheduled Areas will have all basic features provided in the Part IX of the Constitution including the additional specific and mandatory provisions envisaged in the extended Act of 1996 However, some provisions of the extended Act are more explicit than those in the Part IX of the Constitution

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment do have a provision for the constitution of Gram Sabha but the powers and functions will have to be spelt out by the State Legislature (Article 243 A) Consequently, Panchayat Acts of various States have lots of variations in terms of powers, authority and responsibility of Gram Sabha But in the extended Act, the Gram Sabha has been made the soul of the democratically decentralised administrative structure and the palladium of tribal identity, traditional customs and practices, community assets and resolving local disputes

The Act has the best intentions and believes in doing good to the tribals in accordance with their perception, beliefs and full and effective community participation Citizen participation is the lifeblood of democracy, it is not a spectator sport Conceptually, the quest to give 'Power to the people' could be favourably dealt at the grassroots unit The distinctive premise is that a small group affords great scope for face-to-face democracy where every citizen gets opportunity to participate on the basis of political equality In other words, participation will be more meaningful and effective if the community, beneficiary organisations in particular, are institutionally and statutorily involved in managing their own affairs and decision-making processes It is an important stabilising element for local government's future and people's growing stake in community development

Significantly, in the extended Act the Gram Sabha has been mandated, though it is missing in the Act of Part IX, to approve all plans, programmes and projects for social and economic development, and selection of beneficiaries for all types of programmes to be implemented in the Village Panchayat area This provision is likely to restrict misuse of power by the political leadership or bureaucracy in the implementation/management of development programmes It would also bring in a measure of transparency and accountability in the system and will lead to closer monitoring by the people It would have been better had a provision been further made that the identification of schemes and their location should be decided by the Gram Sabha In the absence of such a provision, the risk of manipulation by the vested interests cannot be ruled out However, this tendency can be checked by the mandated provision for every Gram Panchayat to obtain a certificate of utilisation of funds from the

Gram Sabha For all this, people must be active, alert and conscious An IEC campaign to make people aware and educate them about these provisions is urgently required

Equally significant is the fact that the extended Act has taken care of the perennial problems of tribal people like growing indebtedness, land alienation, forest related problems, displacement, alcohol, water and other natural resources, etc Further, it has been mandated that either Gram Sabha or the Panchayats at the appropriate level has to be consulted before acquisition of land in these areas Similarly, while rehabilitating the displaced persons from such projects, these bodies shall be consulted so that re-settlement would be realistic, viable and acceptable to the affected families

It is common knowledge that tribal areas are rich in mineral, forest, water resources, etc Recognising that tribal community should retain command over these natural and economic resources, powers for planning and management of minor water resources in these areas and granting licence for mining or leasing out minor minerals should be vested with Panchayats at the appropriate tier This would reduce illegal mining or over exploitation of natural and economic resources to a great extent

Considering the problems prevalent in the tribal areas, a clear provision has been made that the Gram Sabha and the appropriate tier of Panchayat shall have certain specific powers in the matters of enforcing prohibition, ownership of minor forest produce, preventing alienation of land, managing village markets, control over money lending, control over institutions dealing with social sectors and its functionaries and control over local plans and resources including tribal sub-plans This provision is likely to protect from the age-old exploitation of tribal population and lead to genuine development and self-reliance

This would also facilitate tribals to chart their own paths of development relevant to their needs and linked to their problems and difficulties, potentials and limitations

More importantly, another provision enjoins upon the State legislature to devolve powers and authority on the Panchayats in such a way as to enable them to be "institutions of self-government" In other words, it is expected that the powers to be assigned to the Panchayats, other than those already specified in the Act, should be specific and unambiguous Panchayats should not be treated as merely performing 'agencies' Sufficient freedom and autonomy should be given to enable them to take their own decisions and manage their own affairs and to have an identity as effective units of self-government

Further, the provision ensures that the process of devolution should be based on the cardinal principle of what is appropriate for a given tier should be decided by that tier and not by a higher level Thus, the legislation must prevent the higher level body from assuming work of lower level or of the Gram Sabha Therefore, for a smooth operation at each level of the Panchayat, a mechanism for coordination among them has to be evolved and a package of required powers and functions has to be spelt out

As the Scheduled Areas populations are predominantly tribal, the Act stipulates that at least half of the seats should be reserved for tribals in all tiers and other communities will have reservation proportion to their population in that Panchayat

At the intermediate or district level Panchayats, if some Scheduled Tribes fail to secure membership, the State Government may nominate such tribes to these bodies But the nomination of such tribes should not exceed one-tenth of the total elected members so that the nominated members would not outnumber the elected members

To ensure further that the Panchayats are manned by the tribals, all Chairpersons of Panchayats at all levels will be reserved for tribals This provision is likely to facilitate tribals to govern these bodies and maintain the tribal character of the Scheduled Areas

The extended Act contemplates that administrative arrangements at the district level Panchayat in these areas may adopt the pattern of Autonomous District Councils (ADCs) prevailing in the Sixth Schedule Areas The Sixth Schedule confers powers of legislation and administration of justice to the Autonomous councils apart from the executive, developmental and financial powers It means that district level Panchayat will have enhanced powers and authority, similar to ADCs plus powers devolved under the provisions of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Thus the powers and responsibilities enjoyed by the district Panchayat in the Scheduled Areas will be of higher order as compared to the counterparts in the unscheduled areas of the States

The points mentioned above bring into bold relief that the extended Act has better features, than the framework provided under the Part IX of the Constitution Moreover, the blending of two types of framework has certain advantages compared to the provisions of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment whose operative frame suffers from many limitations

Some Areas of Concern

DESPITE a number of redeeming features stated above, one entertains doubts that a few grey areas may emerge in due course of time Some such issues which need further thinking so that remedial steps could be taken while implementing the Act are discussed here

The Act is applicable to the Fifth Schedule areas only, it does not cover the Sixth Schedule areas Moreover, there are some tribal areas in the country which are neither covered under the Fifth nor Sixth Schedule In such areas what will be the organisational frame of local governance for tribal population? The limitations of applicability of the extended Act will prevent these tribal populations from taking advantage of the special constitutional provisions of local government system

The Sixth Schedule Area which is out of the purview of the Act, has the structure of autonomous district area which is not necessarily co-terminus with the administrative district boundaries They do not have any statutory body below it, that is, at the intermediate level (Block level) or at the village level In some places, at the sub-district level, there is neither a democratic nor a traditional structure Consequently, a void is created at the grassroots level and in the absence of such grassroots structure no organic link could be maintained between the lower and higher level bodies

Under the provisions of the Fifth Schedule, a Tribal Advisory Council (TAC) is to be constituted to advise on such matters pertaining to the welfare and advancement of the Scheduled Tribes in the State A question arises whether the TAC will become an obstacle in the growth of the Panchayati Raj structure at the local level because functional domain of Panchayats will be curtailed and they may perceive TAC as a rival centre Secondly, Panchayats will be the creation of State legislature and to some extent the administrative control will be in the hands of the State Government In such a situation, whether the advice and guidance of the TAC will be binding upon the Panchayats, if so, the Panchayats will receive two types of instructions from the above and occasionally it may be conflicting or contradictory Also, what will be the linkage between TAC and Panchayats? A view is being expressed that when the new dispensation of Panchayats are established, continuation of TAC may not be relevent If TAC has to continue, what suitable modifications may be required in the entire structure and functioning of the TAC

The Act envisages that legislation of the Panchayats shall be in consonance with the customary law, social and religious practice, etc These aspects have lots of variations among various tribes within each state How far will it be possible to assimilate all types of practices in one legislation? However, it may not be possible to have different legislation for each of the tribes within a district or state Also, the customary laws are not properly codified and documented

A village has been defined as a habitation of a community It means every community will have a separate village In a village, several communities may be living and a particular community may be living in different geographical spread It may be difficult to demarcate a village in a wide geographical spread of a particular community In such a situation the revenue village may not be co-terminus with this type of villages The term 'community' is not clearly defined in the Act and therefore it would be difficult to delimit a village and it may lead to various complications and confusions

Usually in tribal areas, hamlets are more common than big villages Therefore, declaring each hamlet as Village Panchayat may not be practical because economic viability and other aspects have to be looked into

Similarly, reservation of seats in every Panchayat will be provided to all communities for whom reservation has been extended under Part IX of the Constitution Under the provisions of Part IX, reservation has been provided to SCs and STs and one-third to women Regarding reservation of backward class communities, it has been left to the State legislature to decide upon it Here again, the term community has been used in a wider sense which includes other than tribal community When a village is going to be demarcated on the basis of a community, the question of other communities living in that area does not arise If it is so, then reservation is only applicable to SCs and in some cases BCs Another question that arises is whether Scheduled Castes and women will be considered as communities for reservation purposes

It has been mandated that the Chairperson at all levels of Panchayats shall be reserved for the Scheduled Tribes In other words, the office of Chairperson of Panchayats at three tiers will be permanently reserved for STs which may go against the judicial verdict The provision under Part IX of the Constitution contemplates that the reservation of offices will be allotted by rotation to different Panchayats at each level At lower level it may be all right but at the district level it may cause some difficulty There are certain districts which are not tribal majority districts and tribals do not constitute more than fifty per cent of the total population of

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PRESS IN INDIA TODAY
Priorities and Preoccupations

AMMU JOSEPH

The author is a senior journalist at present based in Bangalore. Her contribution is taken from her presentation before the Dialogue on Globalisation of Media and its Impect on Society, organised jointly by NAMEDIA in collaboration with Actionaid India at Bangalore (September 13-14, 1997)

I must confess that my knowledge of economics is regrettably but undeniably limited. I will, therefore, restrict myself to highlighting some of the trends I have observed in the press over the past few years. These, I believe, have quite a lot to do with changes in the social, cultural and political environment which have been brought on, at least partly, by the new economic climate of the late 1980s and early '90s.

The Indian press has played different roles—radical and conformist in turn—at different points in its history moving from revolutionary zeal during the nationalist movement to uncritical complacency in the years after Independence, from renewed commitment to democracy and social justice in the wake of the Emergency to largely unadulterated excitement over economic "liberalisation" and "globalisation"—and the delectable fruits thereof—in recent times.

Before going into more detail about the current phase of the press in India, I would like to acknowledge the difficulties and dangers of generalising about anything in this huge, sub-continental nation and, by extension, about the Indian press—which is as multi-layered and diverse as almost everything else in our complex, plural society. While discussing general trends, it is important to recognise that there are and always will be exceptions to the rule.

Further, on account of my own illiteracy, I cannot presume to comment with any authority on that section of the press which addresses the largest number of people in this country—that is, newspapers and magazines in local languages. I will, therefore, confine myself to what is, perhaps misleadingly, known as the national or mainstream English language press. Although the readership of this section of the press is a mere fraction of that commanded by the regional or Indian language press, it is widely acknowledged that it enjoys power and influence way beyond its actual reach and, to some extent, sets the agenda for the rest.

Among the important factors that more or less dictate the priorities and preoccupations of the press is, I believe, the composition of the people who run it. It is significant that the so-called "national", English-language press is dominated by relatively affluent, upwardly mobile, university educated, upper caste, urban males, although the past couple of decades have witnessed an influx of women into the profession, some moving into responsible positions (but not yet the top spots). This has meant that this section of the press has fairly consistently conformed to the broadly liberal yet elitist values espoused by this section of society.

Having said that, one must also acknowledge that the presence within the same press of individual journalists who consider it their professional duty to highlight events and issues related to development, human rights and social justice has by and large ensured that the experiences and aspirations of the disadvantaged and the marginalised have been reflected in it—to a greater or lesser degree—at various points in time.

Still, the overarching class interest of the decision-makers in the press has always been clear. It is, perhaps, illustrated most vividly by the fact that, even at the best of times, while a battery of reporters was assigned to cover business and corporate affairs, virtually no newspaper had a labour correspondent entrusted with the responsibility of communicating the experiences and views of workers. Considering that most newspapers are owned by big business houses, this is hardly surprising.

By the same token, the economic and social class composition of those who make up the national press explains the largely uncritical and unqualified enthusiasm with which most newspapers and journalists have cheered the so-called "liberalisation" and globalisation process. After all, they or rather we represent the middle and upper class consumer who has gained from the new policies and recent budgets, the tax reliefs and import duty waivers, the explosion of consumer goods, including those once considered "luxury items", and the general relaxation of various controls that once inhibited our lifestyles.

Over the past decade or so, there have been noticeable changes in the profile of the press in India. Many of these have been dictated by twin, mutually-reinforcing phenomena: the growth of the electronic media and the increasingly consumerism-oriented nature of the Indian economy in the grip of the "liberalisation" process (which was unofficially set in motion in the mid-1980s though it was formalised only in the early '90s)

Although television was introduced into this country as a "medium of education, rural uplift and community development, we all know that today it is primarily a medium of entertainment The commercialisation of Doordarshan, the emergence and penetration of domestic and international private channels and the consequent ascendancy of TV as the prime medium for advertisements, has had a major impact on the press Newspaper economics have had to be rethought The larger newspaper chains have been compelled to diversify Many have even invested in television companies

At the same time, in order to corner as much of the available print advertising as possible, each newspaper has had to seek new ways of making itself commercially attractive The introduction of colour photographs on news pages, which we in Bangalore have witnessed over the past year, is one example of this drive The dilution of editorial content is another, of which more later

One result of this anxiety has been the blurring of the *lakshman rekha* that was once drawn between the editorial and commercial wings of press establishments Two decades ago, the staff of the advertisement department of a newspaper company would not even be seen in the editorial sections of major newspapers, most editors then would have had nothing to do with them, let alone brooked any interference from them Today, editors and advertising executives in many newspapers meet and plan joint strategies to attract more advertising revenue for the paper

While the editorial and advertisement departments of a publication have a common, justifiable interest in boosting circulation and ensuring financial viability, their motivations and approaches were once different from and independent of each other The consequences of getting editorial policy and practice mixed up with revenue generation are fairly serious as far as journalistic integrity is concerned

But this is clearly the way the wind will continue to blow A couple of years ago, a journalism student told me about an introductory lecture at the beginning of their course during which the speaker had made the statement that journalism is a business I was aware that the newspaper industry is a business but I had not realised that journalism itself had become one

Today we have newspaper proprietors who proudly describe their publications as products, implying that they are no different from other consumer products such as soaps and shampoos And who openly state that, as far as they are concerned, there is little difference between the functions and requirements of a journalist and a manager One prominent proprietor famously boasted that he could easily run his paper without any journalists To drive home the point, he reportedly gave editors of his publications the additional designation of assistant product managers, and product managers of the company the additional designation of assistant editors Fortunately, as far as I know, this was a temporary measure but the spirit of it survives nevertheless

The diminishing autonomy and authority of editors and, by extension, journalists at other levels *vis a vis* the management in newspaper establishments is a disturbing trend—not because power in the hands of journalists is an unmitigated good but because the trend bodes ill for the independence of the press, which is essential for democracy The trend has also affected the stature of editors as a whole, which in turn has implications for the profession

The intense competition between publications in the race for readers and, through them, for advertisements seems to have brought about a sea-change in newspaper business ethics at one time, there was a live and let live approach to competitors in the newspaper world, each paper confident that it had its own loyal audience In the past few years we have witnessed strategies, including price wars, designed to mock at or even kill competition It is important to be aware of the possible negative impact of such business practices on pluralism and democracy

Now to add address the question of whether the current over-riding emphasis on commercial viability and profitability has had a direct and perceptible impact on the quality of newspapers and on journalism itself There is obviously no simple or single answer to this question

Let us first consider some of the positive effects of recent development

- There is a new willingness in many newspaper establishments to invest in technology, as a result of which production quality has improved and newsgathering has been facilitated
- there is also a more generous investment in actual news-gathering activities, as a result of which there is more direct coverage and less dependence on indirect sources of information, at least in some instances (though it must be mentioned here that many profitable publications continue to depend on freebies for journalistic travel)
- there is a new eagerness to establish each publication's "unique selling point" (USP) as a product, as a result of which there is a little more dynamism in news-gathering
- there is a new consciousness about design and layout, as a result of which publications today are on the whole more visually appealing
- the proliferation of publications has led to the

growth of job opportunities in the press and a consequent rise in remuneration, as a result of which journalism has become an attractive profession for bright young people.

- thanks to the growing demand for training, journalism education is more widespread an no the whole more professionally oriented than ever before.

However, even these bright clouds have their dark linings.

With appearance and packaging becoming all-important, content often takes second place (some of the glossy, colourful weekend supplements of newspapers are cases in point).

Saleability rather than intrinsic worth seems to determine what stories are most actively pursued (remember press excitement over the front page "exclusives" on the Duchess of York's private visit to Bangalore earlier this year?).

The special characteristics of journalism as a profession, in terms of its role in a democratic society, seem to be less of a motivating factor for many new recruits (business journalism is clearly the growth area today, as reflected in the increasing number and prominence of pages devoted to it as well as the number of journalism students who wish to specialise in it).

The new "professional" mind-set is often reflected in the nature and parameters of journalism education as well as journalistic practice today (technical proficiency seems to take precedence over any kind of orientation about the broader role of the press in society and the knowledge and understanding that journalists need to cultivate to fulfil this purpose).

In addition, thanks perhaps to the onslaught of television, the press, once seen primarily as a vehicle for the dissemination of news and views, now seems to be under pressure to provide more and more entertainment. Unfortunately,this trend has not yielded quality humour or other creative forms of entertainment. Instead, taking the easy way out, the press serves up as entertainment tidbits about the lifestyles of the rich and the famous, the bold and the beautiful. The back pages of some newspapers today are exclusively reserved for gossip—when the local high society and fashion world can't provide enough snippets, Bollywood and the global entertainment industry and glamour world are roped in.

Incidentally, this is not always just innocent fun. The intimate links between editorial and commercial interests (referred to earlier) are often visible on these pages, sometimes even more regularly than on the business pages.

Again, in the age of television sound bites, it is assumed that the average reader has an attention span that will not last beyond 500-800 words. All events and issues must, therefore, be reduced to small, easily digestible nuggets. If brevity did not amount to superficiality this would perhaps be all right. Unfortunately, gloss, shallowness and superciliousness seem to be the order of the day.

In the brave new world of economic "liberalisation" and globalisation there seems to be little left of the old "liberal consensus" about the media's role and responsibility in a democratic, developing country like India. Once the market and the trickle-down theory have been accepted as the panacea for all ills, there is surely no need to continue to worry about those who are deprived of the most basic of human needs and therefore have no place in the much-vaunted marketplace—even if they happen to make up the majority of the country's population. In fact, the very fact that they are the majority can be and often is held against them: they breed too much, population control is surely the answer to their problems as well as those that they create for the country.

A couple of years ago, members of the management of a leading national newspaper, speaking to students of communications in Bombay, stated categorically that there was no room for "bleeding hearts" in their organisation. One well-known editor once commented disparagingly on a journalist who persists in writing about what he considered "depressing subjects": "She's too committed, too much of a crusader." In today's media world, this is definitely a disqualification. There is no doubt that the space for coverage of issues relating to disadvantaged sections of the population are shrinking at a rapid pace. Between political gossip (who is going to topple whom, who is aligning with whom, etc.), scams and scandals (minus any analysis of what the siphoning off of various astronomical amounts of money has meant for the country and its citizens), and the lifestyles of the privileged, where is the time or space for the realities and concerns of more than two-thirds of the population?

It is not that such issues never make an appearance in the press today. However, when they are occasionally taken out of the cupboard, given a dusting and placed on a page, they tend to be presented in a simplistic, unidimensional, superficial manner which may contribute to public awareness of the existence of these problems but does little to increase public understanding of some of the most serious and pressing challenges facing the nation.

Despite the fact that journalists today have more access than ever before to information and perspectives on a wide range of subjects, there seems to be little interest in pursuing knowledge and developing understanding, possibly because it is not required or encouraged by the editorial hierarchy.

As a result, the symptoms of the various chronic ailments that afflict our society are still occasionally covered by the press but very little effort is made by journalists themselves to diagnose the disease Except for the editorials, which are internally generated, much of the interpretation and analysis that appears in the papers—mainly on the editorial pages and, in some cases, in Sunday magazine sections—is contributed by people outside the newspaper structure

Let us take some stray examples In recent times the press has been reporting the rise in crime rates, rowdyism and gangsterism in our cities and the growing influence of the underworld on different aspects of life But these reports are rarely accompanied by serious attempts to help readers get to the root of this urban phenomenon

Even the most obvious question are not often raised For example, could it have anything to do with large-scale unemployment and underemployment, the dispossession experienced by the urban poor, the hopelessness and alienation of disadvantaged young people facing bleak future? Could it be connected to a prominent feature of our "liberalised" times the widening gap between the haves and the have-nots and the increasingly conspicuous consumption habits of the rich and the famous which are exhibited for all to see by the media, both print and electronic?

Similarly, crocodile tears are routinely shed in the press for child labour, especially when there has been a particularly vile instance of cruelty to child workers, an accident causing the death of some child labourers or dramatic campaigns such as the efforts to "liberate" bonded child labour But there is less evident interest in finding out why this problem persists unabated despite all the attempts over the past decade to tackle it Simple legal remedies are favoured over more long-term strategies to tackle the complex political, economic and social roots of the problem Child labour, with its pathos, is an acceptable topic but if coverage of it goes beyond human interest and quick-fix solutions it gets boring who wants to be bothered with steady and secure employment for adult workers, fair minimum wages, basic needs, and so on?

While corruption is the hot topic in these scam-a-day times, the press seems content to cover what the courts, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) the Enforcement Directorate and other official agencies, as well as the friends and foes of the accused, say or do about it The connection between corruption and widespread, persistent poverty is not its headache Investigative journalism does not go so far as to systematically uncover the reasons why so many of our people continue to live below the poverty line when the official budget allocation for anti-poverty programmes is allegedly second only to the allocation for defence

Women's issues have gained a new respectability in the profession But much of the coverage continues to centre around violence and atrocities or the anxieties and aspirations of the so-called "new woman" There is less interest in the chronic, sometimes undramatic facts which reveal the essence, deep-rootedness and seriousness of the problems that women face and little attempt is made to help readers understand the systemic nature of gender-based discrimination and oppression Under the circumstances, there is not likely to be any let up in the number of dowry murders, female suicides, rapes, female infanticide cases and other such staples to be reported

One major problem is that while a growing platoon of journalists is assigned to the corporate beat, more and more special pages are devoted to business news, and there is grown specialisation within business journalism, hardly any newspapers have correspondents or pages to focus attention on education, health care, agriculture, labour, and so on, which are vital issues that have a direct bearing on the lives of the majority of our citizens As a result, there is very little expertise among journalists in these fields and, consequently , the scant reporting on them tends to be superficial and, often, misleading

In the final analysis, the press today merely reflects the priorities and preoccupations of those who produce and consume it The most telling recent example was the instant coverage in a local daily of its reader's reactions to the Prime Minister's suggestion that students be allowed to graduate from the pre-university stage of education (otherwise known as +2) only after they have helped five fellow citizens attain literacy

It is only to be expected that the middle and upper classes would be outraged at the suggestion Nevertheless, quite a few responses did suggest a cautious acceptance of the idea But the headline chose to highlight the majority opinion "The verdict (10 + 2) + (1 x 5) = 0, Callers ridicule PM's idea of putting additional burden on students" And the newspaper, which went to the trouble of conducting a mini opinion poll on the issue, did not see fit to elicit reader responses to the fact that half the country's population is still illiterate after 50 years of independence (while the class to which readers and journalists belong has access to high quality educational facilities) Nor did it try to generate ideas on how citizens can join in the effort to deal with this gigantic and vital problem facing the nation

It goes without saying that the illiterate half of our fellow citizens is not reached by the press But does this mean that the press is not responsible for reflecting their concerns and interests? ■

PRESS IN INDIA TODAY

A Study in Contrasts

At the Top of the Heap

According to a recent nation-wide study, between 600,000 and one million Indian households earn more than Rs 10 lakhs a year and almost six to 16 million households earn in the range of Rs 1 to 5 lakhs annually

- Some people in this country who not only can but do buy cars at Rs 24 or 35 lakhs, bathroom fixtures worth lakhs, sunglasses for a lakh of rupees, pens for Rs 37000, and even underwear at Rs 5000 each and socks a Rs 600 a pair[1]

At the Bottom of the Heap

Over 300 million of the country's 900 million plus people—that is, about one-third of its population—live in absolute poverty India is home to more than a third of the world's absolute poor

- According to the United Nations Development Programme, India ranks 135th out of 174 nations in terms of human development—in other words, only 39 countries of the world are worse off than ours in terms of the welfare of their citizens
- In the 1985-95 decade, about 135 million Indians had no access to health services, 171 million of our fellow citizens had no access to safe water and 640 million of our compatriots—that is, more than two-thirds of our population—had no access to sanitation
- India is the global leader in poverty and hunger, with almost a third of the world's chronically undernourished people living in our country Approximately 320 million Indians—that is, more than a third of our present population—are severely malnourished A national survey done in 1990-91 found that more than 85 million of our fellow citizens can barely manage to eat two square meals a day
- Around two million infants die every year in India, most of them from preventable causes Some 75 million under-fives in India—or 63 per cent of the country's population below the age of five—are malnourished (this is, incidentally, more than double the average rate for Sub-Saharan Africa) The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) estimates that at least 5000 children die every day in India from diseases resulting from malnutrition India's under-five mortality rate is amongst the highest in the world at 115 per 1000 live births There is, of course, considerable variation in the male and female mortality rates, but we will go into that later
- At least 73 million children in India do not go to school Only 64 per cent of those who do enter the educational system reach standard five Needless to add, the proportion of female children enrolling in and completing primary schooling is consistently owner than that of boys, but more of that later to make matters worse, of the children completing standard five, a large number cannot actually read or write a simple sentence
- India has the dubious distinction of harbouring the largest number of the world's working children It is said that a quarter of the world's child labour population can be found in India and that a quarter of the country's child population consists of child workers although there is a great scarcity of reliable statistics, it is estimated that there are at least 75 million child labourers in India, working long hours under terrible conditions in situations of extreme exploitation
- About a quarter of the approximately 12 million girls born in India every year do not survive to see their 15th birthday Despite belonging to the biologically stronger sex, almost 3,00,000 more girls than boys die every year In fact, more females than males die in India at every age level up to 35 years The continuing, unnatural gap in the mortality rates of Indian males and females has been identified as the main reason for the country's perverted sex ratio, which has declined from 972 women to 1000 men in 1901 to 927 women per 1000 men in 1991
- Although child marriage is against the law in India, it is the norm in many parts of the country The 1981 Census found that the mean age of marriage of "currently married women" in the country as a whole was 16 7 Of the 4 5 million marriages that reportedly take place in India every year, three million apparently involve girls in the 15-19 age group It is not surprising that the sudden upswing of female deaths in this age group is due largely to the teenage pregnancies occasioned by the unlawful but socially sanctioned practice of child marriage
- Only half the country's population is literate The female literacy rate in 1991 was a pathetic 39 4 per cent, leaving more than 60 per cent of the female population of the country aged seven years and above completely illiterate In some states, and in rural areas in general, the situation is even worse, in 1992-93, 41 per cent of Indian girls in the age group six to 14 were not attending school ■

What Led to the Two-Nation Theory and Partition?

RM PAL

What led to the "two-nation" theory and who was responsible for the partition of India in 1947 which led to human rights violations of the worst kind caused by communalism? Some young historians like Ayesha Jalal (*The Sole Spokesman*, Cambridge University Press) and Joya Chatterjee (*Bengal Divided Hindu Communalism and Partition 1932-47*, Cambridge University Press)[1] have, in recent years, shown remarkable objectivity and scientific outlook—shunning all journalistic flourish, common in our country—in answering this question, which is not the conventional revisionistic view of history. According to Jalal, Jinnah did not want the partition of the country which conclusion is reinforced by Chatterjee who gives conclusive proof from her research that it is the *bhadralok* Hindus of Bengal (including the Congress and Hindu Mahasabha) who wanted Bengal to be partitioned. Older generation of scholars like H M Seervai who hold the Congress responsible for the partition of the country are rare.

For those who witnessed the partition, who were actors and participated in the tragedy for whom partition is not mere history—many of whom have been searching their hearts to muster courage to come out with the truth—it is not an easy job to do so, though Kuldip Nayar is one of those making valiant efforts to face the truth, through his regular widely published columns on the subject. One of these, "The Two-Nation Theory" was published in May-June 1997. In this piece he refers, among other things, to the Congress approach to the Second World War, the Quit India stir, M N Roy apropos of support to the war effort, the Gandhi-Jinnah stand on the partition of India, etc.

Nayar does not give any definitive opinion about Jinnah's role in the partition of the country, or what led to the two-nation theory. His only comments are:

> Both Gandhiji and Jinnah stood poles apart as much in dress as in thoughts. Jinnah was elegantly dressed with a stiff white collar even in hot weather. Gandhiji wore only a doubled-up *dhoti*. For one the two-nation theory was a knife to cut the Gordian knot of the subcontinent's independence question, for the other the two-nation theory was the perpetuation of the subcontinent's ills. 'Vivisect India,' Gandhiji said. Jinnah was 'Mr Jinnah' to the closest of his followers but Gandhi was Gandhiji to even non-Congressmen.

The author, a former Principal of Rajdhani College, University of Delhi, edits the PUCL Bulletin.

Nayar appears to contradict himself with regard to the question of the 'Quit India' stir, and is, at places, rather ambivalent. At one place he criticises the Communists and M N Roy for their support of the War effort (that is, for being anti-Fascists) and for not joining "Sardar Patel (who) had envisaged an underground movement" against the British. At another place he writes:

> Many years later when I met Patwardhan (Achyut Patwardhan was one of the young heroes of 1942, and was also one of the first to have been disenchanted with political parties and their corrupting influence) to commend his role during the 1942 agitation, he regretted it. He said that the 1942 stir was *not necessary because the British would have anyway left*. This turned out to be a correct assessment (emphasis added). (Achyut Patwardhan, as is well known, said so in public—in a public lecture on the 25th anniversary of the 'Quit India' resolution he declared at the August Kranti Maidan in Bombay, that the British had no other alternative but to leave India after the War and that the 'Quit India' stir was unnecessary.)

My purpose is not to make any attempt to demolish Nayar's arguments—I value his friendship highly—but to give another side of the coin in a forthright manner, without any ambiguity—and no journalistic flourish. Furthermore, Nayar and I have one thing in common—we both came from Pakistan, and we both were nationalists at one time. In any case, most Bengalis and Punjabis were devotees of Subhas Bose. (Many *bhadralok* Bengalis hailed Hitler as an *Avtar*!) We both witnessed the partition. And I am sure, like me he did not contribute to the partition of the country. In any case, I for one, even now feel nostalgic about "East Bengal". (Although I do not approve of the kind of treatment that is meted out to the Biharis who have been left behind in Bangladesh—in fact, no civilised man can approve of that. If Pakistan does not accept them, Bangladesh must accept them as their own. How can Bangladeshis, who claim to be the inheritors of a culture propounded by Tagore and Nazrul Islam, treat the 'Biharis' as foreigners? They should be generous and cosmopolitan, as Tagore and Nazrul Islam were.)

I may strike another personal note. My father who was a plebian was opposed to the partition of Bengal in 1947, but my maternal uncles who were big landholders and feudal in their behaviour wanted partition—they could not dream of being under a Muslim Chief Minister! My parents did not leave East Pakistan—they lived there until 1960 They left, persuaded by their Muslim friends, only when they were very old and could not look after themselves—to join my elder brother in India

Another personal note I had the pleasure and opportunity of working, in an honorary capacity, in a project, *Documentary History of Partition of India*, in Hamdard Institute of Historical Research in Delhi The first volume (which, I am told by the editor, is being published soon) covers the period 1937-40 (Lahore Resolution of the Muslim League) A number of documents, hitherto unpublished, are revealing, but I cannot quote from them since that was the understanding between the editor and me

II

NAYAR refers to M N Roy, although he does not appear to be familiar with Roy's ideas, his War thesis, his views on fascism, imperialism, democracy, the Hindu-Muslim problem, and Jinnah's role, which are very relevant in the context of partition of India (Nayar refers to M N Roy, "a radical humanist", in 1942 Roy had not propounded the philosophy of radical humanism, he did so in 1946 In 1942 Roy was a radical Marxist/Communist) However, this reinforces the fact that Roy is not widely read

Roy became unpopular with the Congress leaders mainly because of his War thesis, and with Hindu nationalists because of his approach to the Hindu-Muslim problem Roy felt deeply concerned and diturbed by two evils—communalism and fascism—constant threats even today While in jail (1931-36) he wrote two books One, the *Historical Role of Islam* with a view to indicating the way to a solution of the Hindu-Muslim problem, two, *Fascism Its Philosophy, Profession and Practice* to warn against the dangers of this monstrosity These were published after he was released from jail (These have been reprinted in the *Selected Works of M N Roy*, Vol IV, edited by Professor Sibnarayan Ray and published by Oxford University Press, 1997)

Historial Role of Islam and Hindu-Muslim Problem

Roy maintains that in spite of the fact that Islam had played out its progressive role before it penetrated India, Islam was welcomed as a message of hope and freedom by victims of the Brahmanical reaction which had overthrown the Buddhist revolution resulting in a state of chaos in Indian society How is it that, he posed the question, the Mohammedans, though not large in numbers, managed to rule a vast country for such a long time, and millions of people converted themselves to the new faith? The fact remains, Roy maintains, that the Mohammedans satisfied certain objective requirements of Indian society Roy therefore appealed to his fellow Indians to undertake a

> dispassionate study of this chapter (which) is of great importance in the present fateful period of the history of India With us, today in India, particularly with the Hindus, a proper understanding of the historical role of Islam and the contribution it has made to human culture has acquired a supreme political importance Indeed, there is no other example of two communities living together in the same country for so many hundred years and yet having so little appreciation of each other's culture No civilised people in the world is so ignorant of Islamic history and contemptuous of the Mohammedan religion as the Hindus The prevailing notions could be laughed at as ridiculous, *were they not so pregnant with harmful consequences* A proper appreciation of the cultural significance of Islam is of supreme importance in this crucial period of the history of India *Unless a radical change of attitude is brought about by a sober sense of history, the communal question will never be solved On the other hand, few Muslims of our days may be conscious of the glorious role played on the stage of history by the faith they profess* (emphasis added)

Roy concludes with the hope that

> Indians, both Hindus and Muslims, could profitably draw inspiration from that memorable chapter of human history Knowledge of Islam's contribution would shock the Hindus out of their arrogant self-satisfaction, and cure the narrow-mindedness of the Muslims of our day by bringing them face to face with the true spirit of the faith they profess

It is hardly necessary to emphasise the point that the above observations remain eminently relevant even today—after partition, and social activists like Kuldip Nayar, more than any one else, should give their thought to what Roy wrote if they are serious about eradicating communalism

Anti-Fascism and 'Quit India' Stir Not many Indians knew, or know even today, particularly those who think that he was wrong in his thesis about the anti-Fascist character of the Second World War, his support to War effort, as also his scientific analysis in 1942 that the Allied Forces would win, British Imperialism would be liquidated and India will be a free country after the War, that Roy was an uncompromising opponent of Fascism throughout his life Roy traces the origin and ancestry of Fascism in the book that he wrote in jail (referred to above) He appealed to "those Indian nationalists who can think, who are not simply swayed by prejudice, or who are not conscious reactionaries, that is, potential Fascists, themselves" not to be proud of philosophy which will bring disaster (This writer gave a fairly detailed analysis of Roy's War thesis in an article published in this journal, March 22, 1997)

Roy chose between freedom and perpetual slavery If the Axis Powers won, the question of even fighting for independence would not arise As is well known, Pandit Nehru and Maulana Azad had decided to "fight against the mortal enemy of all freedom", but could not muster courage to challenge the rest of the Congress High Command, Nayar acknowledges this

> Nehru and Abul Kalam Azad did not want to embarrass the war efforts which, they knew, were directed towards fighting Fascism

And yet he must criticise Roy for his fight against fascism! Nayar does not also make any effort to explain why, in spite of their commitment to anti-fascism, lent their support in passing the 'Quit India' resolution, while in effect it meant support to fascism The fact remains that there was, and is no relational explanation

Roy's thesis in 1942— "prophecy" In December 1942, Roy announced

> The War is going to end in 1944 when the Fascist Powers will be comprehensively defeated, and that Indian freedom fighters must bear in mind that 1943 or 1944 cannot be 1939, and that whatever be in the mind of a Churchill or a Roosevelt, none will be able to bring the world back to 1939

He made the further prophecy that "Japan will be defeated, and after the war Britain will be seriously weakened in every respect" He declared that "in view of the fact that British imperialism will have no power to retain India, *transfer of power was inevitable*" because *British imperialism was bound to be liquidated* (emphasis added)

It is in the background of the above that Patwardhan's regret about the launching of a wholly "unnecessary stir in 1942"—in fact, it was a disaster—and Nayar's agreeing with this assessment, referred to above, is statesmanlike But how does it reconcile with what he writes at another place

> Patel was amazed when (the Communists) said 'no' to his offer of an underground movement And not only they, M N Roy, a radical humanist, accepted funds from the government and help War efforts?

Apart from the fact that the language used sounds like that of a small-time politician, one can only say, echoing Sophocles, how thoughtful people can think so thoughtlessly!

It may be added that outside the Congress there were a large number of distinguished, freedom-loving and patriotic Indians like Dr Ambedkar and many others who had actively supported War efforts and were part of the government during the War Their services were eagerly solicited by Pandit Nehru and his government and on whom he relied heavily (For quite a few years, Pandit Nehru could not find a Finance Minister from the Congress party) They never regretted their active cooperation with the British in the fight against fascism History of the sub-continent would have been different—for the better—if the Congress had supported the efforts and fought against Fascism, and in the process solved the Hindu-Muslim problem One might added that in the fight against Emergency, against communalism, and against other fascistic tendencies today, Nayar has been working with and actively cooperating with one of those, V M Tarkunde, who "accepted funds"—he was the General Secretary of M N Roy's Radical Democratic Party during the War (Incidentally, a specific amount was allotted, a meager Rs 12,000 odd per month to the Indian Federation of Labour of which M N Roy was the General Secretary, in the budget of the Central Government, for carrying on war efforts to fight fascism the destruction of which enabled India to gain independence—there was nothing secret about this amount)

Nayar and "patriotic liberal nationalist" like him might remember that it was those Second World War anti-fascists who stood up against the fascistic and authoritarian regime imposed by the Party and its leaders in 1975 who boast of launching the 'Quit India' stir, and who during the 1975 Emergency, let loose a reign of terror, barbarism, and violence and it is they who justified violations of all standards of morality, justice and freedom on ideological grounds, and no wonder, therefore, they did not fight against fascism during the Second World War Our "liberal nationalists" (whatever this expression may mean), at least those two strive to put a curb on the rise of fascism in our country (manifested by communalism and authoritarianism), might shed their unnecessary patriotic arrogance and learn to respect those anti-fascists who contributed their mite in defeating Fascism in 1939-45 as a result of which India became an independent country

Communists (of the ruling groups) have, in recent times, pretty often expressed their regret that they isolated themselves from the 'Quit India' stir Which means, logically, that they now regret their fight against fascism Whatever they may now say about Stalin, the fact remains that but for his valiant and heroic fight, the Axis Powers could not be defeated—a truth which is acknowledged even by most irrational and rabid anti-communist historians in the West And if the Axis Powers were not defeated, India could not become an independent country Sophisticated scholars and crafty liberal-nationalist will, of course, tend to dismiss this as a very simplistic conclusion!

Role of Jinnah and Congress attitude towards him In the light of recent writings on the partition of the country, a lengthy quotation from Roy on Jinnah written in September 1948 is appropriate

> Mohammad Ali Jinnah was the most maligned and misunderstood man That experience made him bitter and it was very largely out of spitefulness that he pursued an

object, the attainment of which placed him in the most difficult position Jinnah was not an idealist in the sense of being a visionary, he was a practical man possessed of great shrewdness as well as of more than average intelligence Such a man could not be blind to the difficulty which was to follow his highly problematical success During the latter part of his career, politics was a gamble for him, having played a game of poker with high stakes, he could not pull out He had to go to the bitter end, so to say Bitter, because he must have been frightened by the spectra of success when it came within the reach of possibility But then it was too late to retreat It was a case of a man getting inextricably entangled in power-politics without having begun with the lust for political power Few would agree, yet, that is a fact which will win the recognition of impartial and dispassionate historians .. Jinnah was temperamentally not a professional politician He began as a liberal for whom politics was a holiday pastime Being a man of outstanding merit, he could not remain a back-bencher Unfortunately, his coming to the front rank of politics synchronised with the desecularisation of nationalism, which doubtful development introduced communalism in politics The responsibility for that fateful turn in the political life of the country must be judged by history But ever since then, politics became a game of wits for Jinnah Successful in that game, thanks to his own cleverness, he won the opprobrium of being a henchman of imperialism The fact, however, is that, if distrust and hatred of the British were the hall-mark of patriotism, Jinnah was always as staunch a patriot as any other Indian *The more that fact was willfully ignored by his opponents and he was maligned and misrepresented deliberately, the more was Jinnah naturally embittered* (emphasis added) But even then his ambition was not to gain political power, but avenge the wrong which he believed had been done to him. But he was not the devil of the drama, as he was made out to be He is no more with us Let justice be done to his memory The homeland for the Indian Mulsims was a Utopia, and territorial division was bound to leave many millions of them out, in a very delicate position of being regarded as aliens, suspected of disloyalty to the land they must live in An intelligent man like Jinnah must have foreseen this tragic consequence of what he demanded Therefore, *I for one do not believe that he really wanted partition of the country*(emphasis added) Like a gambler, over-confident of his wits, he staked high, believing that the other party would compromise on his terms *That would have been for the best of all concerned But the latter having taken up the attitude of all or nothing, Jinnah was driven to the bitter end*—of gaining a victory he himself dreaded and which he did not survive (editorial in *Independent India*, September 19, 1948) ’

Historians will go on exploring who was responsible for the partition of India? Meanwhile, we may take a sane and civilised view and insist on our textbook writers and columnists to give up the "hate campaign" against Jinnah, and against those who fought against Fascism In any case, invectives cannot substitute for logical debate and discussion

Finally, this distorted view of history involving hatred will always stand in the way of a normal and healthy relationship between the two countries, India and Pakistan ■

NOTE

1 This is what Joya Chatterjee writes in the chapter "Conclusion" in her book, *Bengal Divided Hindu Communalism and Partition 1932-1947,*

"The inwardness of Partition cannot be fully understood through a study of the motives of those in Delhi and in London Nor do investigations into Muslim separatism tell the whole story When push came to shove (in Bengal), *bhadralok* Hindus preferred to carve up Bengal rather than to accept the indignity of being ruled by Muslim (I have) attempted to challenge the prevailing wisdom about Partition on a number of counts Partition is generally believed to have been a consequence of his separatist politics of Muslim minorities, but in the case of Bengal, Hindus evolved a parallel separatism of their own The Congress High Command is widely, but wrongly believed to have acquired only reluctantly to Partition This study suggests that, on the contrary, not only was the Congress High Command ready to pay the price of Partition in order to strengthen its hold over an unitary India, but that the Bengal Congress campaigned successfully for the vivisection of its own province on communal lines The United Bengal Plan had no takers on its home ground, culture was deployed as a mark of difference rather than evidence of traditional unity in the region, and *bhadralok* Bengalis, far from launching agitation against it, actually fought for the Partition which gave them a separate homeland of their own Partition was not imposed by the centre on an unwilling province (This book) has shown how the Communal Award and the Poona Pact deprived the *bhadralok* of political power at a time when agrarian depression damaged their economic position and gave new opportunities and power to some Muslims The measures enacted by successive Muslim governments demolished, step by step, the structures that had long sustained *bhadralok* dominance Hindu communal mobilisation emerged as the most powerful of the competing political strategies that were evolved in response to this series of challenges Secular strategies of a populist sort were also devised by an emerging left but these failed to carry the bulk of *bhadralok* opinion, which grew ever more parochial, more concerned with preserving narrow self-interest and more virulently communal The 'Hindu' communal discourse of the *bhadralok* articulated the deeply conservative world view of an embattled elite, determined to pay whatever price it had to in order to cling to power and privilege It was a discourse that was deeply communal in intention even when it did not invoke religious imagery or deploy sacred symbols

the arguments set out in this book may have some relevance to another debate which continues to dominate thinking about India's political future A central theme of this work has been the idea of a *shift* from nationalism to communalism Whatever similarities in style and idiom between nationalist rhetoric and Hindu communal posturings, the differences are critical Nationalism was directed against imperialism, and gave top priority to anti-British action The communalism of the *bhadralok* was directed against their fellow Bengalis History for the one was the struggle against British rule, for the other, it was the celebration of British rule as an age of liberation from the despotism of Muslims Its key political objective was to prevent this 'despotism' from returning when the British left India, and to deny that Muslims could be Bengalis, and by extension Indians

The *Hindutva* version of the history of the last decades of the Raj has it that Congress was 'anti-national' because it consented to Partition and surrendered to Pakistan the soil of the motherland, that Communists were 'anti-national' because they collaborated with the British during the War effort Only the Hindu organisations, in this account, remained true to the cause of the nation The pernicious consequences of self-serving doctrines of this sort have gone much further than the division of a province, now once again they threaten the very future of the nation (pp 266-268)

Two-Match All, Two-Set All, and Then....

DEEPAK PAL

An aroma of expectancy hang in the air Every Indian heart was throbbing Each one of them was waiting with bated breath Would he able to make it? That was a million-dollar question And, the answer to that could come only from him Seated on his chair by the court-side he looked up towards the sky Sun was as bright as one would wish it to be He looked at the court It gave a weary look after more than three days of turmoil He knew everybody's eyes were fixed on him He undoubtedly was the man of the hour The huge scoreboard read two-set all—the deciding fifth set was to start in no time He, like the fabled "tortoise" slowly but steadily and surely was inching forward to the goal The chair umpire called "time", and wielding his racquet he made for the court He—on whom rested the onerous task of making it Mahesh Bhupathy his name

◆

EARLIER in the first reverse singles match the Olympic gold medallist Leander Paes went down to Chilean No 1 and World No 7 Marcelo Rios in a four-setter The score reading 7-6 (7-5), 4-6, 0-6, 6-7 (3-7) Leander's defeat put extra pressure on Bhupathy, for that squared the series with a two-match all score

More of it later Now a little about the event It was India-Chile Davis Cup World Group qualifier The venue was the DTA Complex in New Delhi Whosoever won would find a place in the group of last 16 —that was the position In the 76-year history of Davis Cup since India made its debut in 1921 and played in it for 61 years, this was India's 150th Davis Cup match, and everything centred around Leander Paes and Mahesh Bhupathy—the two talented racqueteers

It will not be out of place to mention here that India and Chile have a common record Both the countries have reached the finals of the Cup but have failed to win it India are three-time finalists in 1966, 1974 and 1987, but lost to Australia 1-4 in 1966, in 1974 it gave a walk-over to South Africa and lost to Sweden 0-5 in 1987 Chile reached the Cup finals in 1974 where they lost to Italy 1-4

◆

WITH this background India's No 1 Leander Paes who is now ranked 109th faced Chile No 2 Gabriel Silberstein in the opening singles That he had an easy sailing against a comparatively weak opponent goes without saying He accounted for Silberstein with a score of 6-3, 6-2, 6-2 in less than 90 minutes "I didn't spend much energy today," said Paes after the match Marcelo Rios made the first day's honours even, defeating India No 2 Mahesh Bhupathy in the second singles—the score being 6-2, 4-6, 6-3, 6-4 The only redeeming feature of the match was Bhupathy's winning the second set and extending Rios to the fourth set Asked whether he felt any pressure when Mahesh bounced back in the second set, Rios remarked, "I never thought the match was slipping away" That much about the confidence of the World No 7 in himself

Marcelo's victory made the doubles encounter more interesting, for it was this match what could jolly well be the deciding factor It seemed that the match would be a straightforward one But the Chilean duo of Marcelo Rios and Nicholas Massu took the opening set at 6-3 The Indian pair of Leander Paes and Mahesh Bhupathy, who are the world's fifth best doubles combination, captured the second set 6-4 The third set also went in favour of the Indians—the score being 6-3 Set number four was a see-saw battle But ultimately the Chileans got the better of the Indians in a tie-breaker It was 7-6 (7-3) in Chile's favour Now began the final set When Indians were leading 5-3 and Bhupathy was serving at 15-30, two Providential escapes helped India avert, what could have been, a possible defeat First Leander's volley was apparently long But there was no call In the very next point Mahesh seemed to have faulted his second serve But, once again, there was no reaction from the umpire Bhupathy, served out the match at 40-30

India was now one up in the series With his tail up Paes took Rios on the third day in the first reverse singles In front of an expectant 4000-plus strong crowd Leander clinched the first set in a tie-break after being down 0-4 The set score was 7-6 (7-5) But much he tried, Paes was off-colour on this crucial day for, from the seventh game of the second set till the second game of the fourth set he could not win a single game The significant feature of the set was that he, thereafter, took it to a tie-break only to succumb to the craftsmanship and pressure of Rios, losing out the set and the match at 6-7 (3-

7). The final score being 6-7 (5-7), 6-4, 6-0, 7-6 (7-3) in favour of Marcelo Rios—the Chile No.1

Leander later confessed that for the first time the Cup stage did not inspire him. Marcelo said that the match had been tougher than was evident

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Now, back to square one, with two-match all, all eyes were focussed on the decider between Bhupathy and Silberstein But as the drama unfolded, the Chilean seemed to have taken control of the situation with Bhupathy handing out the first set to Silberstein in a tie-break 7-6 (7-4). The story of the second set was not any different The games went with each holding his serve until the ninth game when the Chilean broke the Indian and wrapped it up with 6-4 And, that was about all. In the third set it was an entirely different Mahesh Egged on by the crowd he went about his business The 23-year old made light of a two-set deficit and accounted for both the third and fourth sets at an identical 6-4, 6-4 score

The fabled "tortoise" turned "hare", now was ready for his leap, and never looked back Though the fifth set was a more intense tussle between the two, yet in the third game Silberstein failed to hold his serve allowing Mahesh the break Once again the set went with both holding their serves till the ninth game when Silberstein had no answer to a sliced return from Bhupathy—clinching the set (6-3), the match and the series for India

A well-deserved 3-2 victory minus, of course, the umpiring lapses in the crucial doubles enounter But then, it's all in the game! And to err, after all, is human

In ecstasy Mahesh went down on the knees to celebrate his victory It was more than a personal triumph It was sailing his country to the quarter-finals of the Davis Cup A proud moment indeed in the career of the Indian racqueteer about whom his senior colleague Leander Paes said "I take my hat off to him today He has done a fantastic job and it's great to ride on his effort"

Such comments don't easily come by

You may or may not agree ■

DOCUMENT

Towards Indo-Pak Unity

A delegation from the Association of Peoples of Asia (India Chapter) consisting of 11 persons, mostly professionals and intellectuals, visited Karachi on August 6-10, 1997, at the invitation of the Pakistan Chapter of Association of Peoples of Asia The delegation led by Ms Nirmala Deshpande M P, included Prof A M Khusro, Prof M H Qureshi, Dr R V S Yadava, Fr Bento Rodrigue, Ms Hamida Habibullah, Prof Mohan Maharshi, Ms Pamela Chatterjee, Ram Mohan Rai, Dr Qamar Tawheed and Ms Shamim Tawheed The main objective of the visit was to establish people-to-people contact, friendship and goodwill The Pakistan delegation was led by Abdulla J Memon, former Minister in Pakistan, B M Kutty and Dr Zaki Hasan

A group under the leadership of Ms Nirmala Despande and Dr R V S Yadava visited Baqai Medical University and Prof A M Khusro and Prof M H Qureshi alongwith other delegates visited Hamdard University on August 7 The same evening Prof Khusro addressed a gathering of intellectuals in Pakistan Institute of International Relations

The inaugural session of the meeting was held on August 8, 1997 which was attended by about 200 persons representing all walks of life In the evening, Prof M H Qureshi addressed the meeting of intellectuals in Irtiqa Institute of Social Sciences It was attended by leading social scientists of Karachi The delegates also visited Ziauddin Medical University and Sir Syed University where the professors and old boys of Aligarh Muslim University had an elaborate discussion about the ways and means of establishing cordial relations between neighbours

The main seminar was held on August 9 and was attended by citizens and press alike Matters of common interest such as cut in defence budget, developing trade relations, exchange of teachers, students, professionals, artistes, art workers and social workers The Kashmir issue was also discussed in a very cordial atmosphere An eminent intellectual of Karachi remarked *"Hum dono ne milker Kashmir ko tabah kiya hai, ab Kashmir Hum dono ko tabah kar raha hai"* There was no belligerence in our presentation from both the sides

Besides these activities, Prof Mohan Maharshi organised workshop of artistes of Karachi alongwith Sheema Kirmani and Javed Sheema Kirmani is a highly accomplished Bharatnatyam dancer of Karachi They have planned to organised a play with the help of artistes from both the countries The play is entitled, *Nazeernama* revolving around the life and poetry of Nazeer Akbarabadi

Fr Bento Rodrigue established contact with the Goan community settled in Karachi He has befriended scores of people in Karachi

There are about 20,000 families in Karachi from panipat who have settled there after partition Ram Mohan Rai, who hails from Panipat, was accorded a grand reception there He had taken with him an invitation from the citizens of Panipat He also presented *chader* and *tabarruk* from the Mazar of Bu Ali Qalander Panipat People were overwhelmed after receiving a person from Panipat It has been conveyed by the residents from Panipat in Karachi that a delegation of about 25 persons will visit Panipat in October A hockey team of children will also visit Panipat, Rai and Delhi to play hockey and establish contact with the children of India

The press in Pakistan has given very positive coverage to the visit, *Dawn*, the *News, Jung, Juraat* etc , all the leading newspapers covered the events very extensively The press conference was well attended Ms Nirmala Despande, Prof Khusro and Prof M H Qureshi answered questions put by the press A wide range of issues were also raised in the press conference The delegates were overwhelmed by the welcome accorded by friends in Karachi There was appreciation of the steps being taken by our Prime Minister to sober the tension The following Karachi Charter was passed unanimously

Association of Peoples of India (Pakistan Chapter) Karachi Chapter

August 9, 1997

This vast continent of Asia is the world's most populous, it houses half the humanity These men, women and children may greatly differ in the colour of skin, race, language, religion, culture, dress and food habits, yet there are many unifying factors They all want to be free, they want to live a peaceful and secure life, they want their children to have all the amenities of a civilised living, without their encountering any discrimination on account of sex, race, creed, caste or class

It is necessary that the states of this continent not only should remain at peace among themselves, they have also to promote world peace At any rate, interests of the people of Asia demand that the states of the continent should create first regional and later continent-wide structures of peace, security and cooperation

In the great variations of climate and economic resources and the state of development among the countries of Asia, it needs to be ensured that all the resources of the earth should be used for the maximum benefit of the peoples living in it This should mean that the main purpose of economic progress should be to ensure a decent living standard for all, in as egalitarian a manner as possible

Large disparities of incomes and living standards within each state and among the states constitute a threat to the well-being of the people and to their sense of security Economic policies of all states of Asia must be formulated in this spirit

While there are many problems elsewhere, South Asia remains one of world's reservoir of dire poverty Millions live in misery and feel economically, socially and physically insecure for good reasons There are unseemly struggles among social groups for scarce economic opportunities and for recognition of the right to equality and share in power and other good things of life within many countries There are fierce inter-state disputes and problems that have kept South Asia divided within itself There have been several wars and at least one arms race, namely, between Pakistan and India, that now has acquired nuclear dimension All this requires special attention

It is, therefore, necessary for South Asian peoples to promote harmony among themselves and to urge upon their governments to adopt more peaceful and peaceable polices among themselves, promote and cooperate in regional economic and cultural progress among their peoples and to try to fortify friendship and harmony among the peoples of the region by creating region-wide structures of peace, cooperation and security with reference to regional economic cooperation

For the purpose, it is vital that disputes between India and Pakistan be ended The best-known method of doing so is to work for and enhance a people-to-people reconciliation at the grassroots level This would necessitate the two governments adopting domestic, economic, cultural and political policies that are attuned to this objective it would imply extending, deepening and intensifying the democratic process, including uncompromising rule of law and implementing not only the better-known UN Charter of Human Rights of 1949 but also the largely unratified Second UN Charter of Social Rights of 1951—in other words, ensuring good governance, in the full range of its sense

We, as members of Association of Peoples of Asia, rededicate ourselves not only to publicise and work for this Karachi Charter but to go on extending the structures and zones of peace throughout Asia and to empower all its peoples

Let the people of Asia, Unite
Let the people of the world, Unite ■

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"Reform" of the United Nations–II

SUBHASH CHANDRA SARKER

The author is a veteran journalist and writer This article was written before the opening of the current session of UN General Assembly where reforms are being discussed We are publishing in this issue the concluding part of the two part article The first part appeared in Mainstream *last week*

Birth of UN

The initiative for setting up a new international organisation for the preservation of world peace was also taken in the midst of War, while the Second World War was raging, by the USA and Britain President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's move was supported by Prime Minister Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill of the UK, into which Joseph Vissariovich Stalin of the USSR (now divided into twelve independent states) was drawn subsequently Remembering the US refusal to join the League of Nations in whose foundation the US President (Wilson) himself had taken an active part, President Roosevelt during the Second World War "wanted the plan for the general international organisation made *during the war* so that the enthusiasm for the war would guarantee their acceptance in the United States and other nations " (*The United Nations in Action* by Eugene P Chase, Mcgraw-Hill Book Co Inc new York, 1950, p 32 Italics in the original text) The basic argument on the important features of the UN was reached among three major powers fighting as allies in the Second World War at the Yalta Conference in February 1945 The three powers were represented by President Roosevelt (USA), Prime Minister Churchill (UK) and Prime Minister Stalin (USSR) That was the last time the three leaders met face to face together as Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945 before the Second World War ended and Churchill got himself defeated in the general election in Britain in 1945 At Yalta the three leaders had decided on the date (April 25, 1945) and the venue (San Francisco in the USA) of the conference, to decide on a new world organisation for world peace

The San Francisco Conference, "the conference to end all conferences" (Eugene P Chase *op cit* p 31) was convened by the governments of the USA, the UK, the USSR and China (France refused to be among the sponsors but still when the UN was formed it became a permanent member of the Security Council with the right to veto) (For the French position see Chase, *op cit* p 31) Fifty countries including India participated at this conference (For a list of the participants see Chase *op cit* p 37) Germany, Japan and Italy, were among the prominent countries which did not find an invitation to the San Francisco Conference The Conference began on April 25, 1945, was originally expected to last six weeks but took longer The most crucial US ratification of the Charter came on September 20, 1945 By October 24, 1945 a sufficient number of the fifty nations had deposited the instruments of rectification to bring the Charter of the United Nations into effect By December 27, 1945 all the members deposited the instruments of ratification

The Predominance of US and allies

THE US government has dominated over the UN all these fiftytwo years Now it dominated by virtue of the veto power combined with its economic and military might, although the majority of UN members are from Asia and Africa But in the early years of the UN of the fifty members as many as 21 countries including USA belonged to the two American continent They generally voted as a bloc and in concert with the USA European countries were all lying exhausted by prolonged war and were utterly dependent on the USA and generally voted (as also now in 1997) with the USA The only exception were the Soviet Union (now broken up), the countries of Eastern Europe (no longer a follower of the Soviet Union), India and a few other countries The US even kept away China from taking its legitimate seat in the UN and the Security council for twentytwo years (China— a founding member of the United Nations got back the seat in the UN only on October 25, 1971), treating its satellite Taiwan (Formosa) as "China" So much for the US profession of democracy! Now of course the US and its traditional allies have been reduced to a hopeless minority of 185 members and countries like Australia, Pakistan and New Zealand have given up their role of being blind camp followers of the USA but still the US domination over the UN is as complete as ever Its acts of aggression and illegal military intervention in the other sovereign nations have been in open defiance of the UN Charter and international law It intervened militarily in Guatemala in 1954 and again in the 1970 and in Cuba in 1967 and Dominican Republic in 1965, in Vietnam in 1964, in Nicaragua in the 1980s, and carried out overt and covert operations against many other countries Even now, in 1997, the interventionist policies and actions of the USA are in full swing Its repeated bid to intervene into India is illustrated by the US State Department officials bid to queer the pitch of India-Pakistan rapprochement by its unsolicited observation about Kashmir It even carried out assassination of political leaders in other countries (such as killing of President Salvador Allande of Chile) David Horrowitz in his thought-provoking study *From Yalta to Vietnam* writes "When America set out on her path to contain revolution throughout the world, and threw her immense power and influence into the balance against the rising movement for social justice among the poverty-stricken two-thirds of the world's population, the first victims of her deed were the very ideals for a better world—liberty, equality and self-determination which she herself, in her infancy, had done so much to foster (David Harrowitz *From Yalta to Vietnam* Penguin, 1967, p 420)

The US government has talked of nuclear disarmament cherished by all the peoples of the world But it has refused to dismantle its own vast nuclear arsenal On the other hand it sought to maintain its nuclear monopoly by suppressing all the information about its nuclear bomb-making The atomic bomb project originated in British wartime research After the US involvement in the Second World War in 1942, Britain shared its research with the Americans "Increasingly, however, the project came under American military direction until, by mid-1943 Britain no longer had any controlling voice " (David Harkness *The Post-War World*, London, 1974 p 45) Commenting on this extraordinary secretiveness of the US Government, a British author writes,

> The resulting United States monopoly, and the decision, unusual in scientific circles to keep secret details of this whole area of research, presented the world with terrible possibilities after the power and honor of the nuclear bomb had become evident in Hiroshima" (*Ibid*, pp 45-46)

President Truman of the USA disregarded his own Secretary for War, H L Stimoson's suggestion for building up US-USSR cooperation in the field of nuclear research and adopted a different policy of maintaining a solid American-West European hold on atomic research However this sordid objective was foiled by the Soviet Union developing atom bomb in 1949 and Hydrogen bomb in 1953 Afterwards China, Israel, India, South Africa and Pakistan have broken the US-USSR hold on nuclear weapons technology In all areas of the world stretching from Latin America to Asia the US Government has behaved like an outlaw The British newspaper *The Guardian* has published a report, based on declassified secret US government document, which discloses the Cold War with a budget of over four billion dollars compared to $ 3 7 billion the US government spent at the time of Cold War with the Soviet Union (see the Report "US engaged in secret N-Programming despite CTBT" by A K Dhar in *The Economic Times* Mumbai August 22, 1997)

Reform of UN Security Council

YET this Government dictates how the UN, IMF and World Bank should function and who should be in the UN Security Council At its formation in 1945 the Security Council was having eleven members when the total membership was 50 By 1963 there was a substantial increase in the number of UN members and the membership of the Security Council was raised of fifteen but the permanent members remained five as before (*Ibid*, p 344) The US has now put forward a proposal for the further expansion of the Security Council and its permanent members The US wants both Germany and Japan, which were not even members of the UN in 1945, and for many years after that time, as permanent members But it opposes the permanent status for India, which was among the founding members of the United Nations and which has been also a founding members of the League of Nations in 1919 and which has an unbroken record of membership of major international organisations for peace since 1919 Both Germany and Japan had discontinued their membership of the League of Nation and have repeatedly acted as aggressors But as after the First World War, the USA financed the rearming of Germany it has done the same thing after the Second World War In the earlier case the German economy was built-up through the vast transfer of funds provided by large credits and loans by the USA through the Dawes Plan (1924) and the Young Plan (1929), which brought international settlements into being the Bank and a series of international moves of a highly involved manner In both the cases the Committees headed by the US representa-tives devised plans for formal payment by Germany for the damages caused during the First World War but in effect strengthened the financial and industrial strength of Germany Sir Winston Churchill who was to be called upon to lead the British Government in the Second World War streadfastly opposed this policy of strengthening Germany His six-volume memoirs *The Second World War*, is very instructive reading in this context—particularly the first volume entitled *The Gathering Storm*

The US President Herbert Hoover announced in June, 1930 an offer to postpone for one year all payments due from foreign governments (mainly West European) to the US Governments for one year The plan had a rider that other foreign government also should agree to postpone the realisation of their claims including reparations from Germany The Hoover moratorium came to an end on July 14, 1932 But no payment was made by Germany At Lausanne the Governments of these countries agreed on a plan to cancel all reparation claims due from Germany in return for a single payment by Germany of £ 150,000,000 in the form of five per cent redeemable bonds However it was a mere eye wash and did not achieve anything "It was unthinkable that anyone would renew the attempt to make Germany pay reparation," writes E H Carr (See *International Relations between the Two World Wars 1919-1939, London, 1994* p 147)

For practical purposes all repayments, German and Allied, ceased in 1932, Only Finland overpaid its war debt to the USA writes Eric Hobsbawm in his perceptive study of twentieth century history (See *Age of Extremes "The short twentieth Century 1914-1991, London, 1994* p 98)

The policy of appeasement about which Churchill writes so bitterly was taking shape In short the direct effect of all these international juggleries was the subsidation of the building of the German War machines which led to the destruction caused by the Second World War

After the Second World War also virtually a similar policy was followed by the USA through the implementation of the Marshall Plan (announced on June 5, 1947 by the US Secretary of State, General George Marshall) which enabled Western European countries to reap the benefit of 1300 million dollars of US funds in four years from 1948 (David Harkness *op cit* p 56) What deserved particular attention is that the aid under Marshall Plan consisted of mostly non-repayable grants rather than repayable loans (Hobsbawm *op cit* p 240) The US lost no time in rearming Germany from 1949 through the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) The core of the new US policy was Franco-German unity The best the French could do was to so entangle West Germany and French affairs that conflict between the two old adversaries would be impossible, Writes Eric Hobsbawm (*The Age of Extremes* op cit p 241)

Similarly in the case of Japan also the US actively helped the rebuilding of the Japanese economy from 1950 onwards "How fast would the Japanese economy have recovered if the USA had not found itself building up Japan as the industrial base for the Korean War and again Vietnam war after 1965?" asks Eric Hobsbawm (*The Age of Extremes,* op cit p 276) The doubling of output in Japan between 1949 and 1953 was entirely financed by the USA In the five years 1966-70 the Japanese industrial output grew at an astounding rate of 14 6 per cent (*Ibid* p 276) And both German and Japanese militarisation has been accomplished by massive US aid Japan as Germany is a major military power now

Thus Germany and Japan have become powerful economic and military powers—thanks to the US munificence and this factor of economic and military strength is cited by the USA in support of making these two countries permanent members of the UN Security Council In both these countries there is a massive presence of US military—which militates against the sovereignty of these two countries In view of the military and economic dependence of both Japan and Germany on the USA it is doubtful if these two countries could ever function independently of the US Government Their inclusion as permanent members of the Security Council would in effect mean strengthening the US hold on the UN Security Council

The Case of India

INDIA representing a billion people was denied a seat of ordinary member of the Security Council in the last election to the seat of the retiring members of the Security Council The hostility to India mainly engineered by the USA is great—it is reported as a punishment of India's refusal to sign the Comprehensive Nuclear Weapons Test Ban Treaty, so actively canvassed by the USA which regardless shamelessly carried out a nuclear test only recently And not surprisingly the USA and its allies are actively opposing India's permanent-membership of the UN Security Council China, whose cause was steadily espoused by India all along for twentytwo years—often as a lone member among the major countries—can play a useful role in correcting the distortion caused by the US policy China is a permanent member of the UN Council and can block any decision on the expansion of the Security Council True in the geographical context China is India's competitor but as India, being in the same position as China's competitor, did not allow competition to blind itself to the injustice done to China by the USA and its allies in denying a seat for China for twentytwo years, is it too much to expect China to stand by India?

Obviously nobody can expect the UN Secretary-General to deal with this complex political question of including the reform of the organisational structure of the UN, it is all the same utterly disappointing to note the total absence of the enumeration of the problem of an anarchronisitic organisational structure of the UN which for almost a quarter of a century since the reorganisation of the UN Security Council in 1963 when the UN had 115 members has been crying for change The membership has also gone up to 185 Even otherwise the Charter of the UN, drawn up during the Second World War needs a drastic modification The salient proposals for the UN reform are also discussed in the publication of the Geneva-based South Centre (See *For a Strong and Democratic United Nations A South Perspective on UN Reform* South Centre Geneva, 1996) But India's case stands apart from this expansion of membership of the UN and other changes and deserved to be treated specially ■

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Rajwant Pal Singh
Editor, *Lal Parcham*
4A/3, Dhillon Marg
Model Town
Patiala-147001

Subhash Gatade
Editor, *Lok Dasta*
F-5/79, LIG Flats
Sector-15, Rohini
New Delhi-110085

Consolidating Indo-Tanzanian Relations

BENJAMIN MKAPA

Prime Minister I K Gujral visited Dar-es-Salaam from September 18 to 20, 1997, to further cement the already strong and durable longstanding ties between India and the United Republic of Tanzania This was Gujral's major trip as the PM outside South Asia Besides his wideranging discussions with Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa (on issues of UN reforms, democratisation of the Security Council, nuclear disarmament as well as the question of rejuvenating the NAM) and a telephonic conversation with former head of state and one of the most outstanding leaders of the African continent, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere (who recently lost his mother and was thus in his native village quite a distance from the capital city), Gujral announced the cancellation of the entire debt by Tanzania to India and said that money was being offered for investment in development projects in Tanzania, declared the first shipment of 1000 metric tonnes of rice as food aid to meet the drought conditions prevailing in the country, donated five computers to the Nyerere Foundation, opened one block at the International Medicine and Technology University, Dar-es-Salaam (being built by the Vignan Education Foundation, Bangalore), pledged sponsorship of three Tanzanian students at the university (which has so far only nine students), inaugurated the resumption of operations at the National Bicycles Company (NABICO), now run by Avon Cycles Limited, Ludhiana, revealed India's willingness to revive training programmes for Tanzanian military personnel in India and conclude a Memorandum of Understanding in the sphere of defence cooperation, and called for an early meeting of the India-Tanzania Joint Commission (which regrettably had not met for several years)—all with the objective of enhancing South-South Cooperation

President Mkapa hosted an official dinner in honour of the Indian Premier on September 19, 1997 and delivered the following speech which is being carried here to enable our readers get a measure of the depth and magnitude of the existing relations between India and Tanzania, our closest friend in Africa —Editor

Allow me, at the outset, to express my profound appreciation to you, Mr Prime Minister and Madame Gujral, for having accepted my invitation to visit our country Once again I welcome you both, and your entire delegation, to Tanzania You will do us a great honour if you feel truly at home in Tanzania, an African country with which India has rich, varied and ancient pre-colonial links across the Ocean we share that bears the name of your great country Your presence among us today, in your first foreign visit outside South-East Asia since you became Prime Minister of India, is yet another manifestation of the very cordial and friendly relations that have always so happily existed between our two countries and peoples

I am also grateful for the opportunity that this visit has given me to personally congratulate you for your worthy assumption of the leadership of your country With satisfaction and great empathy I want also to use this opportunity to repeat my congratulations to you and the people of India for celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of your independence last month

Fifty years ago, India became the first British colony to be independent In his book, *Discovery of India*, Jawaharlal Nehru said

> The freedom of India must be the symbol of, and prelude to, the freedom of all other nations

That is, indeed, what happened To those of us who shared with you the indignity of being colonised, 1947 is equally important to us for it marked the beginning of the end of British colonial rule Your independence was a great inspiration to the anti-colonial struggle in Africa and beyond Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru were household names to all those yearning to be free Your practical support and diplomatic solidarity with the liberation struggle in Africa was decisive and is indelibly etched into the history of our continent's freedom epic

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As we pay tribute to the inspirational role that India played in Africa's independence struggle, we do recognise today another inspirational role that India, the largest and one of the most tested democracies, can play in Africa as we seek to embrace and entrench democratic governance When Nehru began the enormous task of democratic nation-building at India's independence, many sceptics, inside and outside the country, wondered openly if India would survive as a country, let alone as a nation Winston Churchill, the man who in 1942 declared that he had not become the King's First Minister in order to preside over the liquidation of the British Empire, was also quoted to have said that India was a mere geographical expression, a place that was no more a country than was the equator

How one wishes Churchill was alive today to see that not only has the British Empire been liquidated, but that 50 years later India remains one nation whose democracy has survived and thrived through thick and thin, and whose roots have gone so deep that it has weathered all threats to its integrity and sustainability Indian democracy has succeeded to reconcile the different aspirations of different religions, castes, and regional groups Few democracies, even in the West, can claim to have been subjected to greater tests Indians have every right to take pride in their democracy and in their political freedom which rightfully they express with assurance and energy You have taught Africa a lesson that there is no religious difference, no regional difference, and no ethnic or caste difference that cannot be reconciled through democratic give and take inspired by basic political principles and fundamental established goals You have taught us a lesson that democracy can allow a highly complex society to reconcile and balance all conflicting claims That is a lesson and experience Africa needs to take to heart in resolving ongoing conflicts such as those in Burundi, in Somalia, in the Sudan, and in other similar conflict areas

The success of India goes beyond democratic nation-building You have conquered the threat of mass deprivation that stalked India in the mid-60s and provided us with yet another lesson that we too can succeed where you have In the economic sphere, India is today the pride of the Third World, opening up with confidence to the globalised international marketplace

There is a lot that those of us privileged to be close to India can learn from you, and that is why it is so important for us to deepen, widen, and consolidate the warm relations of friendship and cooperation between us I am glad that the good discussions between our two sides this morning have enabled us to agree on how to proceed

Many opportunities exist for bilateral economic cooperation within the framework of a revitalised Tanzania-India Joint Commission The Joint Commission must be revived and it must now produce results It must perform the crucial task of facilitating and creating an enabling environment for the promotion and consolidation of our bilateral relations in education, science and technology, trade, industry, agriculture, investments, and many other areas In particular the Joint Commission must seek to enhance the role of the private sector in both countries in our bilateral cooperation As governments, we must create the political, legal and administrative framework of our cooperation But, it is our private sectors that must be the engine for economic growth and cooperation The participation of the business community in the work of the Joint Commission is thus of paramount importance

Let me at this juncture, Mr Prime Minister, express my heartfelt thanks to the Government of India for the developmental and technical assistance rendered to Tanzania For many years, Tanzanian nationals have undertaken studies in various institutions in India under the assistance of the Government of India I am told that the number is growing and the scope for expansion is widening Only this morning you assured me of your continued support to our human resources development, of your flexible approach to Tanzania's inebtedness to India, and of your offer of emergency food aid in this year of great need in our country On behalf of the people of Tanzania I thank you and the Government of India very much indeed

I should like also to express my appreciation that the Indian private sector, with the encouragement of the Indian Government, has shown interest in the many opportunities for profitable and mutually beneficial investments in Tanzania Trade between our two countries has picked up from $109 million in 1993-94 to $164 million in 1995-96, an increase of over 50 per cent in only two years I hope that soon we shall sign the Trade Agreement that is presently under negotiation and thereby create a wider scope for increased trade between our two friendly countries

The participation of India at the Interntional Investment and Technology Forum in Dar-es-Salaam from November 5-8, 1996, was very encouraging Some 58 Indian companies, representing a wide range of activities and sectors, took part and identified at least 22 projects for investment

Two months ago, a group of Indian entrepreneurs from the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) visited our country and signed a memorandum of understanding with the Tanzania Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (TCCIA) aimed at enhancing economic and trade cooperation between the two countries Only last month during my visit to the Shinyanga region I was informed of a modern cotton ginnery at Ushirombo, Bukombe district, that is being set up by the NIPHA Group of Calcutta

This is one of several recent Indian investments in Tanzania Others include the purchase of the National Bicycle Company (NABICO) by Avon Cycles of Ludhiana which you visited yesterday, investments of Tata Company (Tanzania) Ltd including the purchase of controlling shares in the Light Source Manufacturing Company, and the International Medicine and Technology University

(IMTU) set up by the Vignan Education Foundation of Bangalore which you also visited yesterday

◆

TANZANIA and India have always held similar views on many regional and international issues of mutual concern We have supported each other and cooperated closely in various international fora and organisations in which we are both members These include the Commonwealth, the United Nations, the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of 77 and we are both firm believers and proponents of practical South-South cooperation

As developing countries, albiet at different stages of development, our two countries have been able to speak with one voice and have had a common stand on many important international issues This collective voice has had an impact in galvanising world opinion on crucial issues touching on the interests of the developing countries as a whole including the advocacy for a New International Economic Order, support for a reform of the United Nations, advocacy for the demilitarisation of the Indian Ocean, reduction of nuclear weapons in the world, and a call for increased South-South cooperation

The decline of East-West confrontation has led to rapid globalisation which has pushed to the fore the glaring inequalities between rich and poor countries This has brought about the question of wealth distribution The forces behind this situation cannot wait for weaker economies Developing countries face a veritable risk of being relegated to the margins of development I sincerely hope that with our accumulated experiences, and the better understanding of our situation, we are now in a better position to take charge of our own development in the spirit of South-South cooperation In that connection I wish to assure you of my government's earnest desire to work closely with your government in the context of South-South cooperation for the mutual benefit of our two countries and peoples I wish to conclude by once again thanking the Government of India for the unwavering support and assistance it has been rendering to my country's socio-economic development over the years, and for the renewed commitment to continue supporting us you expressed today I am convinced, Mr Prime Minister, that your visit will further strengthen the friendship and the cooperation that exists between our two countries ■

Institute of Social Sciences
New Delhi

International Conference
on
Europe and South Asia: 500 Years
16 - 20 May 1998
Calicut & Cochin
Kerala

(The inauguration and 3 days programme beginning 16 May will be held at Calicut and the last two days programme and valedictory with a public meeting at Cochin/Ernakulam)

The Conference will deliberate upon the following areas in symposia and working sessions. **Cultural Process, Political Economy, Nation and Identity in South Asia, Globalisation, Religion, Education, Trade and Commerce, Contemporary Europe and India.**

The related themes will be discussed in the historical context of the relationships between India and European countries - Portugal, The Netherlands, Denmark, France and Britain. It will be a unique occasion for academics, thinkers, writers and public persons from Europe, India and other countries to reflect and review the 500 years of relations between Europe and South Asia beginning 1498. Academics desirous of participating in the Conference and presenting papers are requested to write to the Convenor: Dr M R Raghava Varier, School of Social Sciences, Mahatma Gandhi University, Malloosseri P.O, Kottayam-686 041, Kerala (Tel: Off. 0481- 597983, Res· 0481 - 580256) or Conference Co-ordinator, Institute of Social Sciences, B-7/18 Safdarjung Enclave, New Delhi 110 029 (Tel· (011) 6175451 Fax: (011) 6185343. Coordination in Europe· European Institute for Asian Studies, Rue des Deux Eglises 35-B-1000 Brussels (Tel (32) 2230 8122, Fax: (32) 2230 5402. The last date for submission of papers is 31 January 1998 The acceptance of papers is subject to review by the organisers.

BLUE PENCIL

'Communal Influence' on Media

G S BHARGAVA

In a magazine article last month, the celebrated columnist, Praful Bidwai, has concluded that 'one of the saddest changes' in the Indian media in the last fifty years is 'its opening up to communal influences as never before' Before going into the substance of his charge and the evidence he cites in support of it, one has to point out the confusion of dates and events in his thesis He is cent per cent right in saying that in the wake of the partition disturbances and the assassination of Gandhiji, the forerunners of later-day *Hindutva*, including the RSS, were in the dog-house in the perspective of mainstream journalism That was despite the harrowing experience of millions of migrants from across the border and the bitterness they brought in their wake Journalists in north India, especially, could not shut their eyes to it Still the media support for the RSS was negligible, if at all

The demolition of the Babri Masjid in December 1992 was another similar watershed The BJP which had in the earlier two decades emerged as a cohesive political force with a fairly large spread in several parts of the country suffered an eclipse in acceptability, especially among those whom Praful contemptuously calls the elites This was reflected in the changed attitude of the media to the party and its accomplices in the outrage

The reference is not merely to the almost universal condemnation of the vandalism in the opinion columns of newspapers and magazines but also to the attitudes of individual journalists I was present at the acrimonious press conference by Atal Behari Vajpayee at the BJP central office in New Delhi four days after the event What Praful dismisses as a 'liberal facade' of Vajpayee is a magnet of attraction to many others including persons like me who are not enamoured of the BJP It is one thing to be fundamentally opposed to the BJP and what it stands for and quite another to denounce its national leaders like Atalji and L K Advani as wolves in sheep's clothing

Atalji had also dissociated himself from the crime, almost openly I was privy to his admonition of Kalyan Singh on the telephone on the issue The party might have purposely put him up to face the hostile press because he alone could have softened up the critics, if at all He, too, was not spared Irate TV and other cameramen who had been manhandled by goons at Ayodhya displayed their damaged equipment to demand an explanation from him, while print journalists, including several women correspondents, cornered him with pointed questions Atalji was shaken by the encounter

It showed that 45 years after independence the BJP's standing with the press was what it had been when its forebear, the RSS, was in the dock following the assassination of Gandhiji Mixing up the two events and telescoping the time gap between them, Praful propounds the theory of decline in the secular character of the print medium in the last fifty years

He builds his case on facile premises like deferential references to Atalji and Advani in the newspapers and the publicity accorded to their pronouncements, even if they are 'inane or repetitive' Which reminds me of the attitude of a callow American newsman who was my neighbour in the Lok Sabha press gallery in the 1950s His running complaint was that our newspapers were 'soft' on communism because of the attention we paid to Communist leaders like A K Gopalan and Hiren Mukerjee No professional journalist will bring value judgement to bear on his or her reporting of pronouncements of leaders

More relevantly, when the designated court in Lucknow recently ruled that several BJP leaders and their allies should face charges in the Babri Masjid demolition case, 47 of the 49 first information reports listed in the chargesheet are from media personnel, Indian and foreign The *Deccan Herald* report highlighted it while *The Hindustan Times* version also mentioned it

Ironically, as well as amusingly, a BJP Note on Praful's article claims credit for 'breaching the secular fort' Finally, it is far-fetched to link the liberalisation of the economy to the 'new aggressive styles of management' of the newspapers It is part of the impact of technology on the profession, in some cases regressively It is wrong to generalise that 'editors and even reporters face covert and overt pressure (from newspaper managements) to conform to a certain line to the virtual exclusion of other points of view' Today's journalists are more autonomous in this respect than their counterparts in the 1950s and 1960s They are also broadminded, largely

Let me mention in this connection an interesting tidbit from *The Week* It was about a function in a temple in Dadar (Mumbai) when a book entitled *Gandhi, the Murderer of Gandhi* was released on August 15, with Gopal Godse and Madanlal Pahwa—the accused in the murder conspiracy—among the participants The theme of the litany was naturally denunciation of Gandhiji and praise of Nathuram Godse, whose framed photograph was garlanded on the occasion The reporters who covered the event refused to take even a glass of water from the hosts, although they did their professional duty of reporting it It was also good that the abomination had been noted, for otherwise we would not have known it existed

It is not possible to do justice here to Praful's article which needs to be read widely Let me end this discussion with a 'quote' from an article by the veteran journalist, V P Bhatia, in the *Organiser* (he is its former editor)

Gandhiji was looked upon 'as the greatest living Hindu and his assassination was a setback to Hindu forces

◆

AN *Associated Press* (of America) item in *The Asian Age* is intriguing, not so much for its content, which is an interview with the Tourism Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, as for the carrier The *Press Trust of India* as the distributor of *AP* news in India is the supplier of Indian news, which works as a kind of *division of labour between the two news* organisations It is thus unusual for a AP report to be directly supplied to a newspaper in India It is also not clear why the Minister, Ajatshatru Singh, who is Dr Karan Singh's son and a scion of the former Kashmir ruling family has chosen an American news agency to disclose the State Government decision to reopen soon bars and liquor shops which had remained closed during the last several years of insurgency in the State The terrorists because of their Islamic pretensions have forced their closure, threatening violence against both their owners and users The cinema houses and video parlours have also suffered the fate

The purpose of the government's decision is to revive foreign tourism in the State So the choice of AP may be appropriate provided it is not also meant to keep it out of Indian newspapers.

Finally, Chanchal Sarkar's column in *The Hindustan Times* is among the finest specimens of development news reporting I have come across He lets the story speak without exercising the columnist's prerogative to lend it a subjective perspective The story is significant because it describes vividly instances of the police in Hyderabad taking a hand in rehabilitating schools falling apart due to neglect and lack of resources In the process, the constabulary also motivated the local community to involve itself in the task Nor were they stray instances of social service by the local police Considering that the police in the State is often at the receiving end of flak for their alleged excesses in countering the Naxalites, it is also newsy

One wonders why the Hyderabad based newspapers have not chanced on it Is it because of a conventional attitude that the police should confine themselves to law and order duties? ■

Random Thoughts

K CHANDRAMOULI

My wife and I spent a Ganapathi Festival fortnight in Bombay and have just returned to Delhi 'Two Cities—A Tale Of' is born out of that visit!

What a contrast! There is no power-cut in Bombay thanks to its organic growth well-ordered We were in a high-rise building, Water from 6 AM to 12 noon and again from 6 PM to 10 PM. Lifts (twin) working all the 24 hours, manned mostly except during nights when one lift works automatically Ready press-walas, willing servant maids with duplicate keys entrusted to them for our flat, coming and going according to the needs of the occupants—be they maidens, bachelors, newly-weds, or both working If there is no broom-stick in one flat, the one from another under the servant's control is readily used and replaced in its place No onions? Sambar is prepared with onions from another flat replaced next day at our cost! Dharavi to Malabar Hill, Ganesh Utsavs everywhere with corporate and personal funding from the poorest to the richest

We returned to Delhi by Rajdhani to find that our servants would not come till hunted down after a couple of days, power cut till 2 PM after which only we could have a reasonable hot-bath, telephone out of order and dead with cardiac arrest, not that we have faced this for the first time like Shankar Dayal Sharma after retirement!

I wonder what is the cause of all this! Over the years bureaucrats cornered real estate in Vasant Vihar and are selling them now at nearly a lakh per square yard, Punjabi refugees took advantage of Nehru and Mehr Chand Khanna to get free plots and tenements in Lajpat Nagar now rebuilt for fantastic rents like the Vasant Vihar bungalows Many Under Secretaries and Deputy Secretaries have become millionaires post mortem having built houses in Jor Bagh in 1957-60 Government on the other hand has come with *ad hoc* solutions to pacify mob fury of the day each time it looks for the ballot One day public sector, now it's disinvestment! Parkinson's Law meticulously followed everywhere whether it be even a time-bound Commission to report on a matter Members of Parliament voting for their own pensions and salaries (sorry, allowances) How to come to power by hook or crook being the motto unwritten—although the manifesto is always people oriented! Everybody is an Authority from DDA to MTNL, to DESU now DVB and MCD No bye-laws enforced and a spree and spurt in house-extensions with 'build anything you want' Chaos reigning as controlled Capital Cosmos—with freshly marked New Delhi Roads for the 50th year of Independence Mother (Teresa) died to remind the nation of its Father although the younger generation was more interested in Diana and her new found Love, Dodi

New Delhi and in fact Delhi itself must be ashamed at the way it has been dithering and dragging its feet Luckily there is no sea or ocean nearby to help God send a Deluge! ■

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS (SEPTEMBER 21-27, 1997)

NATIONAL

September 21

- Prime Minister I K Gujral, after his two-day stopover in Dar-es-Salaam, heads for his date with US President Bill Clinton in New York and for his address to the UN General Assembly His aides brief select journalists on board the plane and assure that the PM shall not allow the US President to determine the course of India's relations with Pakistan
- Kalyan Singh is sworn in as the BJP Chief Minister of UP after Ms Mayawati completed her tenure as the BSP Chief Minister
- Assam Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mohanta, on his return to Guwahati from New Delhi, tells the press that he has written to the Union Finance Minister to probe into violation of the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act by the tea companies which are accused of providing funds to insurgents through transactions abroad

September 22

- Samajwadi Party President Mulayam Singh accuses UP Chief Minister Kalyan Singh of reviving the Ayodhya issue and tells the press in Lucknow that his party will not tolerate this and is prepared for any sacrifice
- Kalyan Singh transfers all the Dalit officers in the CM's office and brings in his upper-caste, 'trusted' bureaucrats
- Crime Branch of the CID questions former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Ms Jayalalitha in Chennai about her earlier statement wherever she affirmed that eight persons belonging to Film Employees' Federation of South Asia had committed suicide because they were forced to starve due to unemployment caused by the deadlock in the film industry as she was told by the FEFSA leaders
- BJP spokesperson Ms Sushma Swaraj says her Party will not re-admit the eight dissident MLAs of Gujarat and will not form the State government if the Vaghela Government collapses in case of withdrawal of Congress support
- Delhi High Court dismisses the petition of the Suzuki Motor Corporation seeking a stay on the appointment of R S S L N Bhaskarudu as the MD of Maruti Udyog Ltd and allows the company to go ahead with its Annual General Meeting The AGM later in the day ratifies the appointment of the MD and withdraws the nomination of R C Bhargava, as the non-executive Chairman of the company on "health grounds"
- French Ambassador to India Claude Blanchemaison says in Pondicherry that President Jacques Chirac will visit India in the middle of January next year

September 23

- BJP Chief Minister of UP Kalyan Singh visits Ayodhya to offer puja on assumption of office
- Former UP Chief Minister Ms Mayawati reacts sharply to the UP Government order to check abuse of the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and says the Chief Minister is "attempting to dilute the impact of the Act"
- Railway Minister Ram Vilas Paswan pulls up the Railway Board Chairman for not scotching the rumour that S Ramanathan, the GM of South Eastern Railway and N C Sinha, the GM of Central Railway were "suspended" when in fact they were trasferred as a matter of routine
- All India Petroleum Dealers Association calls for a countrywide strike by all petrol pumps on October 4 to press their demand for a higher commission on sale of petroleum and diesel
- Mumbai-Ahmedabad Shatabdi Express is derailed near Anand in Gujarat None of the passengers are hurt but nine workmen along the track are injured and train services to Mumbai and Delhi are disrupted
- Janata Dal General Secretary Mohan Prakash, in Bhubaneshwar to quell dissidence in the party, alleges collusion between the Congress and the BJP to split the Janata Dal

September 24

- Supreme Court rejects former Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao's petition challenging the September 12 ruling of the Delhi High Court upholding a decision of Special Judge Ajit Bharihoke to frame charges against him and 19 others in the Rs 3 5 crore JMM bribery case
- Former Gujarat Chief Minister Chhabildas Mehta and Gujarat PCC President C D Patel meet Congress President Sitaram Kesri in New Delhi to press for withdrawal of Congress support to the Vaghela Government
- Chief Metropolitan Magistrate of Delhi Prem Kumar issues summons to owner of the Star TV network Rupert Murdoch, Star TV Chief Executive in India Ratikant Basu and 26 others to appear before him on October 27 to reply to a lawyer's complaint who accused them of showing "obscene movies"
- UP Chief Minister Kalyan Singh changes portfolios of BSP Ministers and allocates to himself 19 departments ranging from Finance to General Administration and Parliamentary Affairs
- Torrential rains sweep coastal Andhra following a cyclonic storm and kill at least three persons even as thousands were evacuated to safer places after a warning issued by the weathermen

September 25

- The designated CBI presided over by Additional Sessions Judge Ajit Bharihoke frames charges of corruption and criminal conspiracy against former Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao and 19 others and fixes November 4 for the trial The accused plead not guilty and accept a trial
- Former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda, addressing the Janata Dal workers' meeting in Patna, calls for the strengthening of a third force in alliance with the Left to counter both the Congress and the BJP
- Indefinite curfew is imposed in Rajouri town (J & K) after the gruesome murder of eight in a neighbouring village
- Farooq Abdullah Government in J & K decides to introduce motorised transport on the Jhelum river in the valley in order to reduce the pollution caused by road transport
- Death toll caused by torrential rains in Andhra rises to 25 as the cyclonic storm in the Bay of Bengal advances towards the coast between Kakinada and Vishakhapatnam
- BJP President L K Advani writes in the party organ, *BJP Today*, justifies the demolition of the Babri Masjid but adds, "if anyone is squarely responsible for the actual course of events, it is the Narasimha Rao Government"
- Chief Minister of Jammu & Kashmir Dr Farooq Abdullah, speaking at the inauguration of a new telephone

exchange at Charar-e-Sharif, says the dialogue with Pakistan could not serve any purpose unless Pakistan stopped arming and abetting the militants to create disturbances in the State

➢ Amritsar's Deputy Commissioner of Police tells the press that Queen Elizabeth II will spend 55 minutes of her two-hour visit to Amritsar on a vist to the Golden Temple

September 26 ➢ Union Ministry of Environment identifies 1254 "major accident hazard" industries in the country, 20 of these in the Capital, which can create disasters like the ones in Bhopal in 1984 and recently in Vishakhapatnam

➢ Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Gopinath Munde says he has asked the Mumbai Police to seek information from Shiv Sena Chief Bal Thackeray in connection with the murder of Gulshan Kumar, the audio-cassette magnate

➢ Traces of haze originating from the Indonesian forest fires reach Nicobar islands but the Weather Department says the haze is likely to turn to southwest and it will be thin and temporary even if reaches the mainland

➢ Work in the Bihar Secretariat remains totally paralysed with employees on strike and not allowing even officials and Ministers to enter the premises

September 27 ➢ Nagaland Chief Minister S C Jamir, former Union Minister Rajesh Pilot and Congress leader Pawan Singh Ghatowar escape an attempt on their lives as gunmen open fire on their convoy on the National Highway to Dimapur

➢ Congress Working Committee, in its first post-Calcutta session meeting, passes a hard-hitting resolution saying "the Gujral Government has failed to deliver the goods" and "despite our support the functioning is not satisfactory"

➢ Inaugurating a two-day training camp for party MPs at Jinjhouli (Haryana), BJP leader Atal Behari Vajpayee asks them to be ready for the mid-term poll that could be forced any time by the present political instability in the country

➢ CPI-M organ *People's Democracy* editorially criticises Union Finance Minister P Chidambaram's economic pitch to lure US investment and warns against "any compromise on India's vital interests" as "it will be wrong to conclude from the Clinton-Gujral meeting at New York that a new chapter has opened in Indo-US relations"

INTERNATIONAL

September 21 ➢ *The Sunday Telegraph* (London) reveals that a team of Pakistani officials is arriving in the British capital to investigate undeclared bank accounts of former Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, her husband Asif Ali Zardari, their relations and aides

➢ Benazir Bhutto writes to US President Bill Clinton to put pressure on India over the human rights question in Kashmir and to push for the release of 32 political prisoners in "the divided Himalyan state"

➢ Arab League Foreign Ministers pass a resolution in their Cairo meeting saying "We invite the Arab countries to take measures to alleviate the sanctions on Libya (imposed by the USA and its allies)"

➢ Afghanistan's Taliban throw out Bangladesh Grameen Bank for giving credit to women for self-employment which is, Taliban say, "spreading shamelessness"

➢ US Attorney-General Ms Janet Reno orders a 30-day review of President Clinton's election fund-raising which might lead to naming an independent prosecutor

September 22 ➢ US President Bill Clinton addresses the UN General Assembly telling the world body that people long for resolution of India-Pakistan differences, promising to send the CTBT to the Senate for ratification, supporting expansion of the Security Council and assuring that the US will pay up part of the arrears in dues if reforms are carried out to their satisfaction

➢ Prime Minister Gujral meets with US President Clinton in New York During their 45-minute meeting the PM agrees to hold detailed talks with the US on CTBT and the President tells the PM "We are very careful not to interfere in anyway with the issues you have with Pakistan"

➢ Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif in his address to the UN General Assembly invokes the UN resolutions and the Simla Agreement to assert that Kashmir is a disputed territory and to claim that now Kashmiri people have risen against the Indian occupation He offers to open negotiations on a treaty of non-aggression with India in the interests of a "just settlement of Jammu and Kashmir dispute and progress on the issues of peace and security"

➢ Police clashes again with demonstrators in Dhaka who came out on a call by the Bangladesh Nationalist Party led by former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, the Jamaat-e-Islami and the Right-wing of General Ershad's Jatiya Party to protest the police action on the previous day's general strike against the City Council's ban on rallies

➢ A thick smog, presumably caused by smoke billowing from the raging forest fires in Indonesia, envelopes parts of Malaysia and Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad seeks help from France and Japan to tackle the choking pollution

September 23 ➢ Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif meets with US President Bill Clinton, informs him about the economic agenda of his government seeking the President's help in encouraging international financial organisations and American enterpreneurs to invest in Pakistan, and conveys his concern about the delay in the resolution of the stopped sale of F-16 fighter-bombers and the blocked money since 1990 President Clinton promises to continue his efforts to have the problem resolved and assures the Pakistan PM of long-standing friendship between the two countries and of his desire to translate this into mutually-beneficial cooperation

➢ Attackers, believed to be Islamic extremists, descend on village Baraki in the suburbs of the Algerian capital, kill at least 200 people and leave a 100 wounded

➢ A Saudi Islamic Court in Khobar sentences British nurse Deborah Parry to death and Lucille Mclauchlan to 500 lashes and eight years in jail for murdering Australian nurse Yvonne Gilford on December 11 last year

September 24 ➢ Addressing the Asia Society meet in New York, Prime Minister Gujral affirms that India has no desire to opt for nuclear weapons in spite of being surrounded by atomic force

➢ Demonstrators in Dhaka demand a ban on religion-based political parties for, they had not supported the 1971 of liberation

- A Sri Lanka court frees 18 people accused of killing the then President Ranasinghe Premadasa as the police fails to press charges against them The accused belong to the majority Sinhalese community

September 25
- *The Financial Times* (London) quotes Pakistani investigators to report that the money taken out of the country by the family of former Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and locked in assets in Britain, France, Switzerland, Luxembourg and Poland came from drug trafficking and "on a conservative estimate" is more than $ 3 billion
- "Prime Minister" of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir Sultan Mehmoud says that an intra-Kashmir dialogue, involving leaders from both sides of the Line of Control will be held in London on October 31
- Chairman of the UK Press Complaints Commission Lord Wakeham announces new proposals, formulated in consultation with the press, to ban publication of photographs by the paparazzi
- On his way back home, Prime Minister Gujral stops at Rome for a day, meets the Italian Prime Minister, calls on the Italian President and is granted an audience by the Pope

September 26
- On board the Air-India special flight heading towards New Delhi Prime Minister Gujral meets the journalists in his entourage but gives away nothing on the outcome of his tour as his assessment of his meetings with the US President and the Pakistan Prime Minister had "already been summed up" by the foreign office spokesperson and it was for the journalists "to judge" whether there was any perceptible shift in the US attitude towards India
- Indonesian Garuda Airlines A-300 Air-bus airliner carrying 234 people crashes while landing in the thick haze enveloping the Northern tip of Sumatra Rescuers fear all the 222 passengers and 12 crew are killed
- The US Space shuttle *Atlantis* blasts off its Florida launch to dock with the Russian space station *Mir* and leave astronaut David Wolf for a four-month sojourn on board the space station

September 27
- Aung San Suu Kyi opens the Congress of the opposition National League for Democracy at her home attended by 750 delegates allowed by the ruling junta after a lapse of six years She urges her party members to resist attempts by the military government to divide them
- A cyclone hits Bangladesh killing at least 47 and injuring thousands in the coastal areas More than 50 fishing trawlers with 700 on board are yet to return from the turbulent Bay of Bengal
- Nine Left factions demonstrate in Kathmandu to urge left MPs to vote for the no-confidence motion against the Government moved by the opposition Nepali Congress
- Aftershocks continue to rock Italy adding to the death and destruction caused by the earthquake which killed 10 and irreparably damaged the basilica of St Francis of Assissi and ruined many artworks, monuments and churches in the regions of Umbria and Marche ■

S K SINGH

Panchayats for Scheduled Areas

(Continued from page 11)

the district In such a situation reserving the post for all the time will be resented by other population in the area

Under Section 4(O) of the Act, the Panchayat at the district level will be designed on the lines of Autonomous District Council (ADC) under the Sixth Schedule This may further bring some structural and administrative complications The ADC has legislative functions and judicial administration, in addition to executive powers If the tribal district Panchayats are given legislative and judicial functions, other district Panchayats will be deprived of from such functional authority and there will be anomaly in the district Pancha-yats within a State The ADC has been empowered to appoint judges for the adminis-tration of justice in their areas and they can raise their own police force These provisions will have to be examined carefully while exten-ding such powers and authority under the extended Act

Till now, the ADC has very limited development functions as compared to XI Schedule of the Constitution So far many States have not devolved powers and functions to Panchayats as per the XI Schedule If the State governments are not willing to devolve such powers, authority and responsibilities to local government then they will have restricted functional domain

Conclusion

In fine, the extended Act for Panchayats in tribal areas are being considered as *de novo* Undoubtedly, some specific and mandated provisions in the Act will provide fillip to the local governance and self-rule for tribals The local government system in tribal areas will have a blend of the arrangements provided under the 73rd Constitutional Amendment and the Sixth Schedule framework This will have additional advantages of mixing traditional with the modern institutions

The emphasis on the grassroots unit of Gram Sabha as a competent forum for participatory democracy and community control of resources will definitely promote common good for the tribal society in general Nevertheless, it all depends upon how the good intentions are translated into positive action

It has also been argued that the benefits of self-government at different tiers should have been extended even to the Sixth Scheduled areas under the provisions of this Act This would have brought uniform and common administrative frame for the entire tribal population in the country ■

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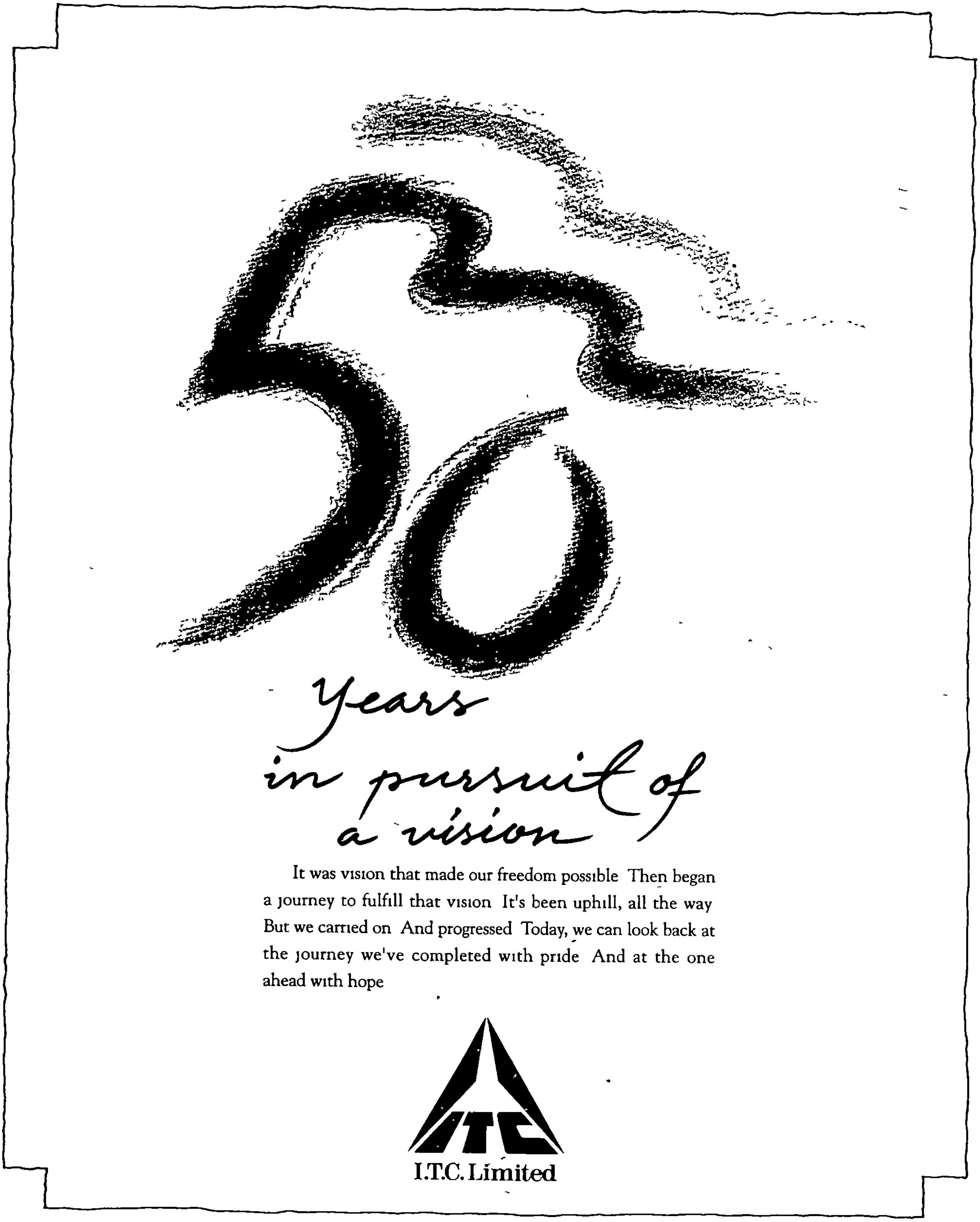

Years in pursuit of a vision

It was vision that made our freedom possible Then began a journey to fulfill that vision It's been uphill, all the way But we carried on And progressed Today, we can look back at the journey we've completed with pride And at the one ahead with hope

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Edited and published by Sumit Chakravartty *for* PERSPECTIVE PUBLICATIONS PRIVATE LTD, 1E/12, "Sewak House" (First Floor), Jhandewalan Extension, New Delhi-110055 Tel 7516763, 7516893 *Printed at*- NEW DELHI PRINTERS, 20/7 Old Market, West Patel Nagar, New Delhi-110008 *Editor* Sumit Chakravartty *Editorial Adviser* Nikhil Chakravartty
General Manager Praveen Mehta *Executive Manager* Jasjit Kay Nagra

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VOL XXXV No 45 October 18,1997 Rs 7

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SUBHAS CHANDRA SARKER ON "TATA ENTRY INTO ELECTION FUNDING : NEW FACTOR IN INDIAN POLITICS"

Temporary Patch-up

After considerable mud-slinging in public over several issues, but most notably the attitude towards the controversial Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, the BJP and the BSP have decided to call a truce in UP

However, if the two have reached an agreement to preserve the coalition that accord is based on sheer pragmatism which, bluntly speaking, means opportunism The whole foundation of the BJP-BSP alliance was opportunistic from the beginning—or else how could such an implacable enemy of the Manuvadi caste stratification of our society as the BSP leadership join hands with those who have never concealed their intention to perpetuate the caste system that Manu had designed? This time the outbursts of Kanshi Ram and Mayawati against the BJP leadership did not materialise into a split of the alliance only because the BSP leaders became aware of the fact that a part of their MLAs would not join them if they walked out of the combination So after all the hectoring they meekly beat a retreat following a late night meeting between the two sides at former PM Atal Behari Vajpayee's residence in New Delhi [The latest BJP-BSP agreement envisages effective implementation of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, as was the BSP demand, but it will not "condone" its "misuse" as the BJP had been insisting The BSP leaders also promised that its Ministers in the UP alliance would not participate in the party's proposed campaign to create an awareness about the SC/ST Act, and that the campaign would be peaceful]

From the BJP side there was a conscious effort not to break the alliance because that would have given yet another opportunity to its detractors to demonstrate the inability of the party to function in a coalition In fact its failure to get allies was the root cause of its incapacity to govern the country after the 1996 elections The party leadership is fully conscious of this lacuna, hence its concerted endeavours to advertise and market itself as an honest coalition partner who could be relied upon That is why it had to come down from its uncompromising stand on the contentious issues

But this truce, as has already been observed by several analysts, is at best a temporary reprieve for the Kalyan Singh Ministry The BSP is far from having been chastened by the trend of the discussions at the meeting at Vajpayee's residence Hence the BJP would have to remain on guard all the time

The recent developments within the BJP being a matter of considerable concern for the leadership (witness the Vajpayee-Govindacharya friction and the unusually strong opposition to Kushabhau Thakre's nomination as the party President in succession to L K Advani), the break-up of the UP partnership would have had a serious effect on the party's prospects in the forthcoming mid-term poll (likely to take place in the first half of 1998) Therefore, the party leaders could not risk the split That is yet another reason for their active steps to defuse the crisis

Nevertheless, the logic of the unfolding reality itself will sharpen the BJP-BSP contradictions in the coming days For strange bedfellows as they are the two parties cannot cohabit for long, whether or not their common enemy—Mulayam Singh Yadav—continues to pose a threat to both Temporary patch-ups cannot guarantee the durability of such marriages of convenience based not on the firm bedrock of principles and policies but on sheer political expediency

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Here's the 'Enduring Image'

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

Contradicting what has been said has always been egarded as a VIP prerogative This, however, seems to have been stretched too far in recent days between the Prime Minister of India and the Foreign Secretary of Britain

Nevertheless, it is worth going into the merit or otherwise of the comments made even if they were officially" contradicted subsequently To describe Britain s "a third-rater power today" is to tell the truth which Prime Minister Gujral did when he discounted before the Egyptian intellectuals at Cairo on October 11 all the hi-i publicity that the British authorities had contrived to arrange during the Queen of England's visit

Very often we forget, particularly the elder generation, about the role of Britain today in the world At the height of its glory, right upto the thirties, Britain could exploit its imperial inheritance for the purpose of asserting that his was *the* great power—the greatest of the great—in he world But when Chamberlain signed in a docile manner at Munich in 1938 yielding to the belly of Hitler, t was clear for all the world to see that the Sun had at last set on the British Empire Prior to this, in the early hirties, Roosevelt's rise to power overcoming the Great Depressions had made it amply clear that the imperial glory for Britain was a thing of the past, and that it had o bow to the might and resources of the United States Britain was in no position to stand upto Hitler, but for he back-up that came from Roosevelt This could be seen even in the archives of the Three-powers meets at Teheran, Yaltan and Potsdam, when the British figured poorly in the face of the USA and USSR The end of the War saw that it was impossible to hold down India, so smashing was Gandhi's 1942 Do-or-Die and Netaji's Azad-Hind crusade and the temper it had roused in the country as a whole The lowering of the Union Jack which began in Karachi and New Delhi in 1947 ceremonially ended in Hong Kong this year Throughout the sixties and seventies, Britain presented a pathetic witness to colonial depletion and its surrender to the US Even in Europe, Germany emerged as more powerful than what Britain appeared to be In the Indian subcontinent, 1947 marked not only the retreat of the colonial power but he mischief sedulously left by it in Kashmir which later on it was in no position to solve

When Tony Blair's Cook offered to settle Kashmir in Pakistan—later on dutifully denied—he was planning off a bogus assurance Incidentally, with all his fulsome "contradictions" in New Delhi, the Pakistan Foreign Office officially remarked that Cook was keen on "a just and fair solution of the Kashmir issue" and volunteered Britain's services to help "in any manner that was possible to facilitate the resolution of the problem" Of course, he had no hesitation in hurriedly "contradicting" this in New Delhi the very next day However, the Queen in the banquet speech, written by the British Government, did underline that "if the countries in the region share a goal and understand that by working together they give themselves a better chance of achieving it, then historical hostilities can be buried for good"—the obvious reference is to the Indo-Pak tension One is, of course, entitled to any opinion on Kashmir, but does not it sound presumptuous for a power to talk about it when in seventy years it could not solve its Northern Ireland problem? For Prime Minister Gujral, any meddling by Britain in the Kashmir affairs could only make it worse and not better It was good that he officially spoke only of the prospect of Indo-British economic cooperation and did not seek the assistance of the power which had done its utmost in the past to create difficulties for Kashmir to be settled amicably between India and Pakistan

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It is indeed absurd to think of Britain as a mediatory power in any international dispute, not to speak of Kashmir Turn to any part of the globe and let there be one case which Britain could claim to have solved on its own Has not its foreign policy, even under the Labour Government in the past, preferred to be the apron string of the USA? There are many more cases of bold initiatives on the part of India under Nehru than what the British Government can show in the last fifty years While India can proudly demonstrate its active role in the non-aligned movement—which Gujral is striving to rebuild under a new context—what can Britain show except what she has done as the docile camp-follower of the USA? When it came to taking an active stand on the European Union, it found itself to be out of step for long Even in the dark days of American hegemony, particularly with the disastrous fiasco that followed its Vietnam policy and also after the recent Middle East crisis, Britain has had no locus standi on anything more than whatever Washington wanted Nobody takes Britain seriously If we do so, it is out of courtesy for the former Raj Nobody takes the Commonwealth seriously even if the newly-elected Labour Government pleads for a new orientation to an old memory It is as unreal as attaching a Rolls-Royce to a bullock-cart or to a horse-drawn buggy

As for the Queen, the less said about the primacy of the Imperial Majesty the better The Buckingham Palace has been going down in importance during the last

(Continued on page 33)

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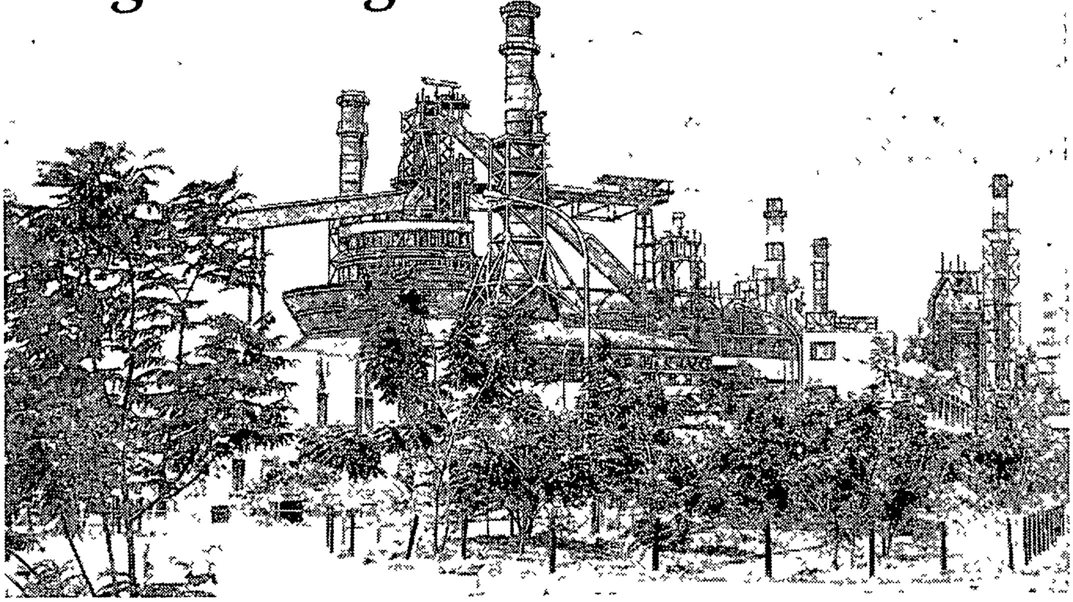

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Importance of the No-War Pact Offer

KULDIP NAYAR

"Defence against whom?"—this was Jawaharlal Nehru's query to Pakistan's Chief Martial Law Administrator, General Mohammad Ayub Khan, who had proposed on April 29, 1959, that in the event of external aggression both India and Pakistan should come together to defend the subcontinent. Nehru's 'no' was understandable but unfortunate because the beginning of lasting friendship ended there and then.

Nehru had in his mind Pakistan's membership of the CENTO and SEATO defence arrangements against the Soviet Union, which was India's close supporter in its stance of non-alignment. Had the joint defence against forces coming from 'north-wards', the word used by Ayub been effected, India would have been better off three-end-a-half years later when it was attacked by forces from northward, that is, China. When Ayub offered the joint defence, Islamabad and Peking stood apart, although Delhi was lost in the *Hindi-Chini bhai bhai* euphoria. But the roles changed a few months later, China becoming Pakistan's ally and India's main rival.

The proposal for joint defence died with Ayub. Yet the suggestion of a no-war pact has been renewed off and on. It is not one country but both of them have taken the initiative to propose a non-aggression treaty over the years. But either procedural wrangling or just cussedness has come in the way of understanding on the banning of war. That may explain why there has never been a serious discussion on the proposal.

Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's suggestion can form the basis of such a discussion. At the UN Gernal Assembly session he said:

> I offer India today from this rostrum to open negotiations on a treaty of non-aggression between the two countries.

He put no conditions. Nor did he say that the pact would be dependent on the solution to Kashmir.

It is not understandable how BJP spokesperson Sushma Swaraj has rejected the no-war pact offer on the ground that it presupposed a solution on Kashmir. In fact, the sequence is the other way round. Nawaz Sharif said that a non-aggression treaty should be signed to facilitate resolution of Kashmir dispute. This is how Lahore's daily, *The Nation,* has reported. How can the BJP twist words to suit its purpose? I expected a person like Atal Behari Vajpayee to welcome the proposal. I thought he would see the difference between the earlier proposal and this one. But the party's ideology is squeezing out liberalism from anything it has.

◆

For the last few years there has been no progress on any front between India and Pakistan because the latter would make Kashmir 'the core issue'. First Kashmir, then anything else—has been Islamabad's refrain. The talks between the Foreign Secretaries of the two countries have again got stuck on Kashmir. New Delhi is willing to discuss the problem, alongwith the other pending issues. But Pakistan Foreign Secretary wants to make a 'show' of talks on Kashmir. This is understandably difficult for the Inder Gujral Government to accept because even the mention of Kashmir is not to the liking of the anti-Pakistan lobby which is quite strong in the country. Does Islamabad want a solution or the sham of propaganda?

Pakistan is, however, making a mistake by insisting on a separate, visible discussion on Kashmir. Once New Delhi agreed to discuss Kashmir in a substantive way, Islamabad should have let it at that. It is no use pushing it beyond a point. What is important is the content, not the form. After a lapse of many years the talks have been held and the Indian Foreign Secretary has given an undertaking that New Delhi would discuss the problem in depth, covering all aspects. By accelerating or by abusing India, which Nawaz Sharif did while referring to Kashmir, Pakistan is spoiling the case.

Mercifully, the third round of talks in Delhi has been 'adjourned', not ended. The two sides are bound to pick up the thread again, particularly after a meeting between Nawaz Sharif and Inder Gujral in the UK towards the end of October. The two seem to be of the same opinion that the dialogue should continue and they have brushed aside objections to the resumption of talks between the two Foreign Secretaries.

Yet the best thing that has happened since the last meeting of the Foreign Secretaries is Nawaz Sharif's offer of a non-aggression pact. And for the first time in the history of India-Pakistan relations, the pact is offered without any prior understanding on Kashmir.

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Even the Pakistan press has pointed it out

But it is not understandable why the Indian officials are determined to sabotage the proposal The vested interests of some of them is known But that they would go to the extent of giving a new twist to Nawaz Sharif's proposal was not expected In fact, they made a fool of themselves in New York when they rejected the proposal Islamabad had a propaganda victory when the Indian officials were cool towards the proposal

New Delhi should seize the opportunity with both hands Any quibbling or further elucidation from Pakistan may give it an excuse to put conditions It is already under pressure at home One Pakistan daily has written that

> the offer by Nawaz Sharif may attract some in India because it would appear to leave India in possession of Kashmir plus the freedom to continue the genocide of the Kashmiris The offer is not as open-ended as may seem at first glance The offer is for opening 'negotiation on a treaty of non-aggression', which is quite different from an offer to sign a no-war pact without preconditions

The mere holding of talks will be a positive thing It will open still another track Suppose the talks between the two Secretaries on various matters, including Kashmir, get derailed, there will be another track, that of the no-war proposal, for movement The effort to reach an understanding will not be stalled Both sides will be talking

◆

THINGS as they stand today do not look healthy at all There is mistrust Whatever one sides does is suspected by the other side Motives are sought where there may be none True, the two Foreign Secretaries will resume the talks because both the governments are determined to continue the dialogue, come what may But the baggage of the past is too heavy There is not much likelihood of progress on the actual problems between the two countries

That is why the no-war pact offer assumes grea importance There is a possibility of the two countries coming to some understanding on keeping hostilities out while grappling with such issues as have defied solution for the last fifty years The peoples on both sides will welcome a no-war pact because their present thoughts are dominated by the fear that there may still be another war if the Kashmir problem remains unsolved A no-war pact will assure them that whatever the outcome of the discussion on Kashmir, the two will not begin shooting What a relief a no-war pact will be

Meanwhile, both the countries must seriously consider the proposal by Mahboob-ul-Haq, a Pakistani expert, to scale down the military expenditure by five per cent and to divert the amount to the programmes to eliminate illiteracy His estimate is that both countries will come to have at their disposal $ 6 billion, more than Rs 2000 lakhs This is a lot of money More than the money, the cut in defence expenditure may set in motion a process that may ultimately banish hatred, it not estrangement between the two ■

Tata Entry into Election Funding

NEW FACTOR IN INDIAN POLITICS

SUBHASH CHANDRA SARKER

The change in the relative standing of business and politics is nowhere as clearly indicated as in the new and unprecedented move of the Tatas to concentrate financing of political parties in fewer hands (virtually in one hand) Earlier the politicians, while serving the interests of business, called the shots, now it is business which calls the shots to ensure that the politicians follow their dictates

Morarji Desai, the late Prime Minister, is on record stating how election was funded in the days of Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi His autobiography, in two volumes, published long before he became Prime Minister in 1977 (the third volume was published in 1980), records that on the eve of the general election, he would call all the top industrialists of the country to his residence, Netaji Subhas Road (Marine Drive), Mumbai (then Bombay for a meeting in which he simply told each how much he and his organisation would have to pay That was all to get the necessary funds The Tata initiative signifies the weakening of the clout of the politicians, who have on the other hand to defer to the industrialists This is the most significant change in the power equation between politicians and businessmen in the country No longer can the politicians dictate to the businessmen who have become the directors of the process of government

This was inevitable after the fundamental about turn in the direction made by the government in 1991 After succumbing to the demand of foreign capital to have unrestricted scope for exploring the natural resources and people of India—which i euphemistically called "economic reform" and "liberalisation"—it was only a matter of time that the native capitalists with most US commercial connection should stake their claims for direct control of the government in the country Not that earlier they had no control over the government The report of the Industrial Licensing Policy Enquiry Committee, chaired by the former ICS Foreign Secretary, Subimal Dutt, had laid bare the process of placing the governmental resources at the disposal of companies in order to enable them to maximise their profit This process of milching the public exchequer for private gains has gone on merrily after independence without any check Indeed the last fifty years have been an era of subsidised growth of capitalism in this country, while the rulers have been professing "socialism" in public The failures of the economy, nevertheless, are laid at the doors of the government's supposed adherence to socialism All these years the government, both at the Centre and the States, have been providing subsidies of various types—grant of capital subsidy, tax concessions of various types, interest subsidy, export promotion subsidy, excise and sales tax subsidy, subsidy on risk bearings on foreign loans, subsidising loans through IDBI, IFCI, ICICI and other agencies Yet the government has not exercised control on management or the cost of final product—making it possible for the businessmen to maximise profits Still the companies have grown sick and the government has again waived hundreds of crores of loans to these companies A partial idea of the contrived "sickness" of industrial units is given by the amount of banks and financial institutions alone remaining unpaid The amount so blocked stood at Rs 13,13,414 crores as at the end of March 1994 constituting 17 per cent of the total outstanding bank credit to industry, rising from 16 5 per cent a year earlier (See *Report on Currency and Finance 1994-1995*, Reserve Bank of India, March, 1996, Vol I, p 10)

It is a minor fact that a practising Chartered Accountant, Dinesh Vyas, is the formal Chairman of the Trust Nobody, including Vyas himself, is under the illusion on that account that in all matters Tata's views alone will prevail In an earlier case the unanimous verdict of a Board of Trustees headed by a former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court was overturned by the Tatas who wanted to dislodge Pran Chopra as the editor of *The Statesman* Such is the concern of the Tatas for the independence of the Trustees Of course, Ratan Tata was not around at that time, when the self-proclaimed wise man, J R D Tata, was at the helm of the Tatas But the incident clearly demonstrates the tradition in the Tata household of treating all opinions not in agreement with theirs with utter disdain

The fund will have an initial corpus of Rs 50 crores or so, as Dinesh Vyas disclosed to Anand Adhikari of *The Hindustan Times*, New Delhi The Trust has three trustees, whose number can go up to five The three trustees are Dinesh Vyas, D M Sukthnakar, a retired civil servant, and Ms Hansa B Mehta, a social worker It would be funded by big business and rich individuals only, as the Trust would not accept any donation of less than Rs 50,000 each from companies and individuals The funds of the Trust would be bifurcated into "Trust Fund" from which all expenses incidental to the administration and "Distribution Funds" from which funds to political parties will be given Which of the parties will get funds? Not every political party, it is specifically stated The parties which, in the opinion of the Trustees, "do not adhere to true democratic" principles (these have been left deliberately undefined), encourage terrorist or secessionist activities will not receive funds According to the formula designed for division of distribution of funds for a particular election,

> In the first phase, one-half of the distribution amount will be distributed on the basis of seats held by them in the last parliamentary elections and the balance after the completion of the said elections (see "Tata Electoral Trust aims at Rs 50 crore" by Anand Adhikari in *The Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, August 29, 1997)

Election results in this country are not dependent on a candidate winning the absolute majority of votes of the electorate in any constituency but are determined by the plurality of votes polled by the candidate among all the contestants and the result is dependent on the candidate securing the largest number among all the contestants in the constituency That is how we have Parliament and State Legislatures which do not always reflect the wishes of the people as it does in France, for example A party polling more than forty per cent of votes is sometimes reduced to hopeless minority in a State Legislature while with less votes it can have a majority of seats in Parliament as the Congress party did after several general elections The BJP in 1989 had only two members in Parliament but now it is the largest party in the Lok Sabha The wisdom of deciding on funding parties on the basis of existing seats is utterly questionable, as indeed of determining the funding on a centralised basis

If funds were to be distributed on the basis of existing seats of a party in Parliament, it would not reflect the national demand as seen from the seats the party wins in the current elections Thus in the

1991 elections the Indian National Congress held 231 seats in the Lok Sabha. If for the 1996 elections it had received funds at the rate suggested, it would result in extraordinary over-funding as reflected by the actual number of seats (140) it got and the percentage of (28.8) votes it polled. Similarly, a party which won more seats than the Congress in 1996 would have been terribly under-funded if the financing had been done on the reckoning of seats held in the preceding Lok Sabha by the party.

Revelation of Insignificance of States

THEN the State Assembly elections will not be funded by the Trust. That is in keeping with the identification of industrialists of the country—particularly the Big Business—with the growingly centralist State which holds all the key to industrial growth (despite superficial changes like the elimination of the licensing system—a meaningless measure since the Centre retains the control through environmental and pollution laws, which confers all the powers wielded by the Centre with licensing). All-important foreign collaboration laws are also administered by the Centre as also foreign loans. There is justification for all these laws as the licensing system had. But the crux is the selective enforcement of the laws in certain cases and the selective relaxation. This is best illustrated by the ever-changing coastal zonal developmental regulations and the forest conservation regulation that the States are mere decorative structures to lull the citizens about their democratic government. Of course this does not fool the financiers who have to identify correctly those who wield effective power.

Prompt Foreign Endorsement

IT is no wonder that the announcement of the Trust has been met with instant foreign approval indicating the extent to which Indian affairs are being determined by foreign powers. The foreign interest was announced to the world by the Chairman of the Tata Electoral Trust himself (See "Foreign JV and Companies evince interest in Electoral Fund", *The Economic Times*, Mumbai, August 27, 1997). The formation of the fund was announced on August 20 and within six days Dinesh Vyas, Chairman of the Fund, could, and thought it necessary to, convey to the public that the Trust had received good response from foreign joint venture companies. This active interest of the foreign companies in financing the elections has ominous possibility. So long the foreign companies had kept their involvement in the Indian political process under wraps. They now feel confident to come forward into the open. Referring to the earlier British rule in India Rabindranath Tagore had spoken of the "weighing scales of merchants taking the form of sceptre". The country is in danger of seeing a repetition of the process. The altruistic instincts of the corporate sector was sought to be underlined by Vyas when he said:

> Most of the professionally managed companies do not intend to buy political favours and yet like to discharge their corporate responsibilities towards a clean electoral process. (*Ibid*)

The obvious falsity of the proposition (the companies are constantly trying to alter government policy in their favour) apart, the statement begs the question why power is being concentrated in this fashion through the Trust instead of leaving the matter of donation to the professional managers of individual companies to be decided on by them according to their individual professional judgements. Is it not creating further concentration in one company (Tata Sons, the settler of the Trust) to dispense with huge funds?

Unprecedented Corporate Involvement in Politics

THE Trust is sought to be sold to the Election Commission by listing its distinguished feature as being unique in the world. On the other hand that no other country with much longer history of adult franchise has bothered to set up such a fund ought to serve as a warning against the concentration of such financial power in one corporate agency.

Behaviour of Trusts in India

THE wilful manner in which the Corporate Trusts are run has been commented upon, among others, by Indian Finance Ministers. In one of his Budget speeches the then Union Finance Minister, in the government headed by Mrs Indira Gandhi, had specifically stated that Corporate Trusts should not be relied upon to stick to their original intentions and those indulged in all types of activities at the cost of corporate funds. It is not the suggestion here that Tata Electoral Trust will also indulge in this type of irregularities. But the trustees are mortal beings, while the Trust being a body Corporate has virtually perennial existence and there cannot be any guarantee that future Trustees also would behave in a responsible manner.

Building up the Clout of Tata Sons Limited

TATA Sons is firmly owned and controlled by the Tatas through their hold on Trusts which in turn own Tata Sons Ltd The tightly controlled Tata Charitable Trust holds eighty per cent of the equity capital of Tata Sons Ltd , which in turn has floated the Electoral Fund In 1995 Tata Sons Ltd floated a rights issue at an exorbitant premium and forced the publicly held other companies bearing the name of Tata to contribute to the rights issue Tata Sons Ltd is not listed in any stock exchange and no shareholder of the company can freely sell his stake in the company which is open to shareholders of listed companies A share of Tata Sons Ltd has got a formal value of Rs 1000, for the purpose of the rights issue the share was valued at Rs 1,00,000 A renunciation premium of Rs 25,000 was put on top of Rs 1,00,000 per share Since the bulk of the original shareholders of Tata Sons are the Tatas themselves and Charitable Trusts under their control, nobody could buy a rights share if the Tatas did not renounce And renouncing their right they got, for nothing, Rs 25,000 per share as premium

The other companies were not all eager (indeed they could not be eager) to invest in the Tata Sons Ltd rights issue since that investment did not fetch any proportionate return During 1994-95 Tata Sons Ltd paid 100 per cent dividend Supposing Tata Sons Ltd was able to pay dividend at this rate a new shareholder of rights issue would get just Rs 1000 on an investment of Rs 1,25,000 In other words the investment is utterly uneconomic That explains the reservation of the corporate executives to subscribe to the rights issue of Tata Sons Ltd And what does Tata Sons Ltd do with all the money collected through the rights issue? It employs these funds to tighten further the Tata hold on companies Thus the process of mutual reinforcement goes on merrily

Governmental Subsidy

THE companies get tax concessions for making donations to the trusts and societies In other words, the Trust funds come from foregone government revenues from taxes Already a publicity campaign has been started to enable companies to claim much greater tax concessions for donations to election funds—of the size of double the amount of donation In effect acting upon this suggestion would mean that a company making an election contribution of Rs 100 would get tax benefit on Rs 200 (instead of Rs 100) Seems ridiculous? But this has been suggested by a person whom *The Times of India*, Mumbai considers important enough to solicit his views ("Govt should give bigger tax breaks for polling funds"—a report by Namita Devidayal in *The Times of India*, Mumbai, September 1, 1997)

> In effect they (the government) should take a step further and give a weighted deduction, which has been done before in the area of export development So if you give Rs 100 you get a deduction of Rs 200 *(Ibid)*

No Accountability

THIS is how the powerful trusts floated by the corporate giants operate and maintain their stranglehold over the economy The trusts are "non-governmental organisations" about whose virtues the media is full of encomiums—of course, with the endorsement of the World Bank And these Trusts are not accountable to anyone

The endorsement of the Election Trust by the major political parties except the Left is quite surprising (but perhaps not so surprising in the context of the increasing domination of the corporate structure) but that does not alter the objectionable character of the Trust even a bit and it remains as objectionable as ever It is reassuring to know that everybody in the Election Commission has not been fooled by the propaganda about "transparency" of the operations of the Trust A senior official of the Commission is quoted to have made the point

> This was being done secretly earlier Trying to legitimise it now is not the way to go about things (see the report "Left hits discordant note in Tata Fund Chorus"—report by Murali Krishnan in Delhi, *The Telegraph*, Calcutta, August 22, 1997)

The point made by the Election Commissioner, G V G Krishnamurthy, that what is needed is a proper decision on the comprehensive proposal for hiking limits of election expenses of candidates by the government which should change the election law accordingly "and the Trust carries no meaning" *(Ibid)* As the political parties are now obliged to file annual income tax returns indicating the source of funds for party activities and fighting elections, the hollowness of the propaganda about so-called "transparency" needs no further elucidation It seems, however, that the Election Commission stands divided on the matter, as the Chief Election Commissioner, M S Gill, on September 4, 1997 expressed a different view welcoming the Tata initiative to the extent of holding it up as a model before the other companies (See *The Economic Times*, Mumbai, September 5, 1997 report entitled "In election funding, do as Tatas do EC to industry" by Kamil Zaheer) ■

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RIGHTS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

What ails Kerala?

E BALACHANDRAN

Kerala became cent per cent literate in 1991 It was the first and the only State to hold that distinction The way the Government of India and various State Governments are functioning, it can safely be assumed that Kerala will continue to remain at the top for a long time to come

Literacy brought awareness of their rights to Keralites, but this soon paved the way for greed as Gulf money began to flow into Kerala People became obsessed with money Business, that is, trading, began to show a facade of growth But how far can an unproductive economy support a trading set-up? As the purchasing capacity of the people dwindled and the inflow of money from the Gulf slowed down, panic began to set in With successive decadent political leaderships, ready to appease anybody and everybody for a few votes, the lot of Keralites began to nosedive to disaster People at the lower strata of society, used to a sort of luxurious life in the past on account of the availability of Gulf money, are now finding it difficult to maintain their lifestyle They cannot altogether give up the style for fear of fall in social esteem They are ready to go to any extent to make money Scruples do not fit in such a set-up

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KERALITES also developed a sort of paranoia Take, for example, the recent hike in petroleum products In other States, leaders of political parties which were not a part of the government but were merely supporting it, such as the CPM, were generally opposing the hike in prices with perfunctory statements But trade unions in Kerala immediately called a general strike by the motor workers It was amusing that unlike in the past, it was not any political party that gave the call for the general strike, because all the political parties which have representation in Parliament from Kerala, are part, or supporter, of the Government of India How can a political party which either supports or is part of the government call for a strike over an issue arising out of an action by its very own government?

But trade unions can do and get away with anything, at least in Kerala In Kerala one can find labourers getting paid for jobs they do not do This is known as *nokkinilppu kooli* or wages for watching (others work) Sometime back the British Library had to pay Rs 8000 as wages to headload workers for watching others work The British Library transported a load of books to some place, where it got it unloaded by its own men The local workers browbeat the British Library to part with money because they said it was their job to unload the books It was not their fault that their services were not utilised When the news spread, the Headload Workers Welfare Board intervened and the money was paid back to the British Library Everybody does not get back money the way the British Library did

One of the reasons put forward for the recent agitation against conversion of paddy fields was that that such conversions deprive the agricultural labourers of their livelihood Whether the paddy cultivators can afford it or not, the labourers say the cultivators have to necessarily cultivate paddy to keep the fire burning in the workers' kitchen When tractors were introduced many years back, the traditional ploughers said they will starve and began to extort a fixed sum as compensation every season from the cultivators The cultivators meekly submitted and even now pay up the traditional ploughers, while tractors do the actual ploughing In this case, it is not even *nokkinilppu kooli* because the ploughers will not be anywhere near the actual ploughing

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THE trouble with Kerala was that that while cent per cent literacy made the people aware of their rights, it did not make them accountable A sort of dogma took root in Kerala that the rich were the enemies of the people In fact one of the early mottos of the Communist Party was *nammal koyyum vayalellam nammudethavum painkiliye* (all the paddy fields which we harvest will be ours) Such rhetoric gave false notions to the people, who more or less believed it When finally the revolution came in the form a bill which restricted the landholding of the people, the harvesters did not get the land, but the middle class cultivators did This made the labourers disillusioned and to placate them the political leaders gave unlimited freedom to the labourers to squeeze the employer The right to work was upheld Thus, even if you do not want, you have now to engage headload workers If you do not want his services, you have to pay the *nokkinilppu kooli* A time may come in Kerala when labourers on their own start working in other's premises and claim wages This may look a little preposterous, but the general mood of the labour class is that they must get work at whatever cost, whether the employer wants it or not, at their terms and conditions This unilateral fixation of wages by the labourers themselves has made the employer pauper An unskilled labourer in Kerala now gets Rs 140 a day

If literacy had brought awareness of rights and at the same time accountability, Kerala would have been a model State with such large sums of Gulf money thrown in This did not happen Looking at the way the economy is being managed, any improvement in the near future is a distant dream ■

TOP-DOWN APPROACH

More Determined Bid Needed In Ninth Plan

SAMIT KAR

When the Ninth Five-Year Plan is poised to take off with the philosophy of more reliance on decentralisation and integrated area planning concepts for the development and formulation of local area plans, such aspirations on the part of the policy planners have little substance when one notices the abysmal lack of infrastructure at the grassroots to translate these spirits into actions Such expressions in support of decentralisation do not have enough credibility

True, the "trickle down" theory of growth, which has been the guiding force behind planning and policy-making in India for about five decades, has failed to achieve the desired goals The focus of attention began to shift mainly during the Sixth Plan period when a number of poverty-ameliorating and rural mandays-generating schemes were initiated There was adequate funding available from the government But with the absence of consolidation of the grassroots in many of the States, there were widespread reports of misappropriation of funds to the Programme Evaluation Organisation (PEO) of the Planning Commission of India Rhetorics began to pour in are such strategies boon or bane in rural India?

The situation in some of the States like West Bengal, Kerala, Karnataka has been somewhat different due to the vitalisation of the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) The volume of rural poverty was checked and there was a steady growth in the overall quality of life Rise in literacy, participation in health programmes were some of the social indicators The PRIs began to work as the watchdog of rural development and the all-round development in some parts of the country was largely due to the sustained enthusiasm of the masses to implement the various government-sponsored programmes

But is it not natural that the spontaneous enthusiasm of the masses which made the fruitful implementation of various rural development schemes over the decades possible, will have its natural death after a certain point of time?

Such signals are already discernible if one takes into account the experiences of different States which are doing relatively well as far as the performance of the PRIs are concerned There was a steady erosion of the level of spontaneous enthusiasm of the people at the grassroots which was seen a couple of decades ago This feature was identified by some scholars as the PRIs getting into the age of decay after attaining ascendancy in the first phase and stagnancy in the second

But in the meantime, the Ninth Plan started with reliance on a people-centeric approach, after noticing some green patches of such experiments where the PRIs were vibrant in discharging their duties due to the political will of the State policy-planners and specific socio-historical particularities, among others But what was possible in some States because of the zeal of the PRIs cannot be achieved for eternity owing to the near-saturation of people's enthusiasm in the task of implementing government-sponsored programmes This is now openly admitted even by the policy-planners

The author is a Senior Faculty Member, State Institute of Panchayats and Rural Development, West Bengal

With the lowest tier of the PRIs, the Gram Panchayat (GP) severely staff-strapped, who will do the "donkey's work", especially when the impact of individualism is having a telling effect on the ethos of collective spirit of the present-day generation?

Take, for example, the case of a GP, the nursery of decentralisation in India Each GP on an average covers about 10-15 villages, having about 20,000-25,000 population It identifies the beneficiaries and implements at least 20 important programmes of the government ranging from agriculture, animal resource development, health and family welfare to social and farm forestry, poverty alleviation programmes, rural electrification, public distribution system, to name a few

But can it be imagined that a GP performs all these tasks with only one whole-time secretary and a job assistant holding the rank of a Lower Division Clerk? There are three Panchayat Karmis of Group D rank What can these ill-equipped personnel contribute in planning and implementing a scheme? The staffing pattern of the Panchayat Samity and Zilla Parishad is also a matter of similar concern, considering the tremendous volume of labour and energy that has to be put in for materialising the schemes of the government

So, the GPs do not have the ability nor the expertise and manpower to cater to the increasing aspirations in the name of decentralised planning In a GP there are two types of members elected and ex-officio members from the Panchayat Samity, that is, the second tier of the three tiers below the Zilla Parishad But barring the Pradhan and to some extent the Upa-Pradhan, none of the members of the GP contributes much to its functioning, apart from attending periodic, routine meetings Not that they are habitual reluctants But most of them are rickshaw-pullers, agricultural labourers and daily-paid manual labour, which means giving more time in Panchayat activities lessen their earnings, and this at times endangers the existence of the families The same story holds good for the other upper two tiers as well

Therefore, it is high time that the government should strengthen the manpower of the GPs from where planning actually starts in the process of nation-building Without vitalising the grassroots, how can the whole edifice of decentralisation be made meaningful, especially when first, the tide of enthusiastic collectivism in the society is on the wane, secondly, the GPs, the living link between the people and the government, do not possess the least infrastructure (both manpower and other necessary logistics), and thirdly, the attitude among a section of the bureaucracy goes against the approach of development administration, which had been patronised by the government for some strange reasons

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THE government in its Approach Paper of the Ninth Plan has pledged for providing more functional autonomy by strengthening the District-level Planning Committees (DPCs) Henceforth, planning within the districts will be formulated and implemented by the district authority by identifying "the felt needs" of the people This means less dependence on the State-level centralised secretariats States like West Bengal and Kerala had already started this exercise With the introduction of the Ninth Plan, such exercises will become mandatory for all the States But is the district administration ready to accept such huge responsibility?

The government should immediately do away with the system of departmental secretaryship,

News Release

Announcing a One-Act Play Competition on the Themes of Violence and Non-Violence

The Centre for Non-Violence Through the Arts at the Darpana Academy of Performing Arts, Ahmedabad has the pleasure in announcing a one-act play competition

Entries must be in Hindi, Gujarati or English and must be original writing The theme of the play must explore the ideas of non-violence in any of their manifestations, shedding new light or highlighting new ideas on the subject The aim of the competition is to get work which will aid in our understanding of the idea of violence to better equip ourselves to deal with the violence inherent in all of us

The winner will be awarded a cash prize of Rs 10,000 and the runner up a cash prize of Rs 5000 In addition, both plays will be produced by the Academy and presented at the new Festival of Non-Violence in February All entries must be sent typed to

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manned by senior IASs Instead, the senior IASs should head individual districts, since districts will become more important centres of formulating and implementing policy decisions The Sabhadhipati of the district should function as the Chairman and a senior IAS as the Chief Executive Officer Strategically and functionally, instead of line departments, districts will be the unit of development administration, which should now be vitalised

The government is formulating suitable plans with an approach of decentralisation But are these not mere pedagogic exercises, when the apparatus meant to discharge such responsibilities does not have the least inputs? The policy-planners should ponder over the fact that what was possible in the yesteryears by encashing the people's motivation and popular spirit, may not be the same in the days to come So, the need of the moment is to strengthen the grassroot administrations by bringing senior, experienced members of the administration in the district, since it will not be the departments, but the districts which will assume form as the unit of development in an era of decentralisation

The simmering down of people's enthusiasm is an affair of such States where the PRIs had been delivering the goods to a certain extent But in terms of number, there are more States in India were propoor PRIs could not emerge due to lack of assertiveness of the teeming millions and consolidation of the landowing gentry in the higher echelons of state power In those States also, such revamping of lower-tier administration is needed, without which the PRIs will instead become a new lever of exploitation over the subalterns in the days to come when planning and its execution are supposed to start from the bottom

Also, suitable legislations should be enacted in order to prevent an elected member of any of the three tiers of the Panchayat, as well as the Municipality, to hold office for more than two consecutive terms, that is, 10 years Continual holding of office breeds vested interest and corrupt, high-handed practices, now becoming a part of political democracy which impedes the accumulation of popular enthusiasm behind any development programme

Such actions should now be contemplated in the wake of the Ninth Plan in order to make the process of decentralisation in India more meaningful and reachable to whom it is actually targeted for Otherwise, in the absence of these actions, the Ninth Plan will only be paying a lip-service without addressing the genuine needs of making the process of planning more decentralised in order to narrow the gap between the people at the grassroots and the planners at the helm of state administration ■

Future of British Monarchy

RABINDRA SEN

For some decades doubts have been cast on the survival of the monarchy in Great Britain In 1977 a leading British astrologer had actually put the disappearance of royalty within just fifteen years In that year a number of politicians and pundits had looked at the silver jubilee of the accession of Elizabeth II to the throne as a sort of royal farewell since they claimed to see portents of the end of the monarchical system in Britain But at that time the monarchy's survival had not been in doubt to the extent it now is, and many had simply pooh-poohed the idea For most of the people the 1977 celebration had been a festival of nostalgia and an emotional binge for things past, with the government sparing no expenditure even in a year of severe economy cuts

In recent years, however, the republican sentiment has been on the rise Not long ago the *Guardian* declared in an editorial that British monarchism was literally dying and called on republicans to "come out of the closet and make their strongest case" Marital woes in the royal family have cost it much popularity among Britons According to an opinion poll for the *Guardian* in August, public support for the royal family dipped below 50 per cent for the first time It is noteworthy that even in 1994 in a similar poll 70 per cent had said Britain would be worse off without a monarch

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It was at this critical juncture when the lightning struck There was no doubt that Princess Diana's tragic death would have a profound impact on the ongoing debate about the future of the monarchy But the question was two-fold Would it have the effect of making republicanism stronger and lead to the abolition of the millennium-old institution? Or would rising anti-monarchism be paradoxically transformed into a pro-monarchy wave reflecting the desire of the people to see Prince William become the King?

Opinions are divided on where the monarchy now stands Predictions with exactitude are not possible But one can plausibly argue that the sad denouement of the Diana episode may provide the answer as to what is going to happen in future At the present moment a massive swing in public opinion either way is unlikely In the immediate aftermath of Diana's death the people who seemed to be drifting in a state of mind characterised by mixed feelings about the monarchy are likely to be influenced considerably If such a person is now asked to choose between the abolition of the monarchy and its retention, the latter option is more likely to be chosen Thus Diana's death may have, at least in the short run, shored up public support for the monarchy by preventing a further swelling of the ranks of the republicans and possibly also by making a dent in the republican camp

Some say that Princess Diana was the monarchy's hope of successful adaptation to the modern world, and that the institution might not long survive her According to a recent Gallup poll in the *Daily Telegraph*, 53 per cent of those questioned said the public standing of the royal family was damaged over Diana's death One might interpret the huge outpouring of national grief to mourn the "people's princess" as an expression of resentment against the institution of monarchy as such Indeed, many thought Diana was poorly treated by the royal family But what really upset many Britons was the royal family's tardiness in showing any public sign of grief So they were expressing their anguish at the royal family's rigidity and perceived indifference to Diana's death The people wanted their Queen on their side when the nation united in grief The response to Diana's death has, therefore, also indicated that the British people do attach a great deal of importance to having figures they can look up to Paul Flynn, a Labour MP, marked the Queen's birthday last year by proposing a parliamentary bill that would introduce a referendum on abolishing the monarchy at the end of her reign If a referendum is held now it will not be surprising if more people vote against abolition of the monarchy Therefore, it would be naive to think that in the wake of Diana's death pressure to abolish the monarchy will invariably grow

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Of all the monarchies of the Western world the British royal family is pre-eminent Anything about

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the royals makes news In his passionate address in Westminster Abbey on the day of Diana's funeral, Earl Spencer pointed out that she "needed no royal title to continue to generate her particular brand of magic" But above all what made Diana the centre of attention was the link with the royal family even after her divorce with Prince Charles The members of the royal family were fully aware of it, as was Diana herself She successfully dared to take on the Palace While agreeing to a divorce she had said that she would continue to live in Kensington Palace and would be known as the Princess of Wales She lost out only in one sense From the date of the divorce she was not entitled to call herself HRH (Her Royal Highness)—a title which signified her membership of the inner circle of the royal family so long as she could use it Nevertheless, the Palace statement stressed

> the Princess of Wales, as the mother of Prince William, will be regarded by the Queen and the Prince of Wales as being a member of the Royal Family

Whatever the Queen thought privately of the Princess, she accepted that Diana's status as the mother of Prince William had to be recognised

The debate on the future of monarchy has until recently been a bit low-key with many preferring to keep quiet whatever their private views Diana's death may trigger a more serious debate The republicans argue that the monarchy is a remnant of a feudal society and that it has held Britain back from becoming a more modern, less class-based society Supporters of the monarchy, on the other hand, continue to argue that the problems of the royal family should be separated from the institution of monarchy They emphasise the beneficent element of continuity provided by a constitutional monarchy Vernon Bogdanor in his book, *The Monarchy and the Constitution,* supports the Crown's residual role as the defender of the Constitution This amounts to much more than Bagehot's famous trio of rights to be consulted, to encourage and to warn It is impossible to lay down guidelines to deal with constitutional crises which generally blow up unexpectedly Bogdanor's answer is that

> alone in the State, the Sovereign enjoys a total freedom from party ties and the complete absence of party history If an umpire is needed—and no democratic State can operate without one—the Sovereign is likely to prove a safer guide than a President

Even this argument, however, is not irrefutable

There are also those who want to reform the monarchy, but do not demand an outright abolition The proposals for reform include financing the monarchy entirely from Crown Estate revenues, disestablishing the Church of England, repealing the 296-year old ban against heirs to the throne marrying Roman Catholics and allowing the first-born child of a monarch to succeed to the throne irrespective of sex Major strategic issues concerning the future of the Crown are being discussed by an informal group of royal family members and their senior advisers The result of these efforts may be a concerted plan to redesign the monarchy in order that it might survive into the next century

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In 1950, two years before Elizabeth II ascended the throne, the dissolute King Farouk of Egypt had said

> In a few years there will be only five kings in the world—the King of England and the four kings in a pack of cards

The situation today, however, is quite different Now it cannot be said that the institution of monarchy will continue to stand rocklike in a sea of change Although a decision to abolish the monarchy before Queen Elizabeth II dies or abdicates her throne seems unlikely, what will happen thereafter is anybody's guess Prince Charles' popularity is very low Last year in a television interview that was never aired but was widely reported, Ron Davies, Labour's Welsh spokesman, considered Prince Charles as unfit to be the King He was defended by fellow Labour MPs Newspapers too defended the politician "MPs who raise questions about Charles are not speaking for themselves but for the millions who think as they do," said the *Daily Mirror* The newspaper called Charles "his own worst enemy" The British Prime Minister's statement after Diana's death that Prince Charles would make a good King will not make much of a difference to the prevalent public attitude It is hardly surprising that opinion polls commissioned by the media after Diana's death show a wish by many for Prince Charles to step aside as heir to the throne in favour of Prince William

In life Princess Diana had been a torment to the royal family, She was often blamed for damaging the monarchy, for destroying the mystique that surrounds the institution Ironically, in death she appears to have restored, at least temporarily, popular support for the monarchy But there are lessons to be learnt Diana has showed the way the monarchy needs to evolve if it is to survive The process of change that has set in is irreversible If Buckingham Palace tries to shut out the wind of change blowing across the country it will only find itself swept away

The people want a monarchy that is more natural and less remote, more like what Diana said she envisioned for her son, the one-day King William In her interview with *Panorama* in November 1996, Diana mentioned that she thought the monarchy should walk hand in hand with the people more than it does "I think that is the only kind of monarchy that can survive in Blair's 21st Euro-Britain," said royal biographer Anthony Holden The monarchy should get out of the groove, and it looks like it will do so, for it knows it cannot survive on its own terms Gone are the days when the British people were enamoured of the institution to such an extent that they not only loved and took pride in the pomp and ceremony of the monarchy and were willing to pay for its upkeep, but also expected nothing in return ■

Moonscaping the Mahatma

I K. SHUKLA

AT&T, the giant telephone company of the United States, in a Golden Jubilee homage to India, features a view of Sabarmati Ashram, focusing Gandhiji's room with Spartan essentials of furniture Somehow the TV screen remains lit up in memory long after the flip second of its flash The memory fills that room with the frail yet giant-size shadow of the Mahatma who looms large despite the absence of a picture in the room The sensation is chastening and exhilarating For a few fleeting moments the viewer is transported into another age, an age when the titan walked on the Indian soil and the subcontinent looked larger and luminous despite its long night of subjugation

As against this visual ecstasy there is the obscenity of deliberately downsizing and marginalising him in the advertisement that the FIA (Federation of Indo-American Associations), California, placed in the ethnic weeklies Just mentioning one will suffice *India West*, June 6, 1997 Bordering the map of India, morphed into Durga with the Indian flag in her right hand, are pictures of some national leaders On the left border, top to bottom, are Tatia Tope, Tilak, Bose, Patel, on the right border Laxmibai, Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekhar Azad, and Nehru Adjoining Nehru, to the left, wedged between Sri Lanka and the Bay of Bengal, is the only block with two pictures, a large Ghaffar Khan overshadowing a diminutive Gandhi, who seems hastily and grudgingly inserted as an afterthought The titan made teeny-weeny

That the neo-Hindu dominated FIA dares thus to denigrate the Mahatma and disfigure history is not surprising at all What really is amazing is that it chose this occasion (August 15, 16, 17 "Saluting the Freedom Fighters") to publicise its pettiness, and that not one protest ever appeared in the Letters column of the aforesaid weekly As to the propriety of the weekly accepting the ad, the less said the better Let that be credited to Mammon's mesmerism, charitably

The author, an erstwhile Associate Professor of English, Post-Graduate Studies, Nehru University, Imphal, is a former Research Associate, School of International Studies, University of California, Berkeley, USA He is also the Co-founder, Coalition for Egalitarian and Secular India, California, USA

It is such groups of ostensibly literate Indians projecting their version of Indian history and Indian culture in the diaspora that sends a chill down the spine This example may look weird, but such abominations abound Only a nonchalant myopia can miss them There is a Kabir Mandir in the environs of Los Angeles that, blissfully, bars Muslims, instead of encouraging them to join the flock Not, of course, via a written fiat, but thoroughly through its exclusivist practice And, then you begin wondering why this fear of Muslims polluting the pristine precincts, why this negation of Kabir in his own temple? Parallel-wise, why in the Golden Jubilee year of freedom, the Mahatma, among its prime architects, is targeted for ostracism, one may wonder

In the case of both, Kabir and Gandhi, the brief answer would seem to be malafied misappropriation In one word Denial Dissing all that the two symbolised and bravely stood for, one in the realm of religion, the other in that of nation And, the perfidy can be prettified by continual hosannas showered on both, by garlanding their portraits, by erecting statues as their memorials, and by endowing research in their names in prestigious institutions

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GANDHI's dismissal is no monopoly of the neo-literates or the neo-rich No less galling is the news that a so-called Gandhian, the ex-President, Shankar Dayal Sharma, found Rs 2 5 lakhs terribly inadequate for furnishing his post-retirement house in New

Delhi So he had the Cabinet grant him Rs 40 lakhs just for furnishing In post-retirement luxury The standard of his august luxury while he was in office can only be imagined This in a country gripped with financial crisis, and lack of funds for a variety of social services needed urgently Our rulers have their own priorities, however

It is this Dr Sharma who made frequent visits to Satya Sai Baba, Shirdi temple, and Tirupati temple—all at the cost of the taxpayer and the national treasury And, it is reported by *The Indian Express*, July 28, 1997, that the Union Cabinet refused to sanction a centrally air-conditioned system and free electricity for which too a request was made How does this addiction to sabyritic insensitivity square with anything Gandhian or is in synch with the current reality of life for the millions in India? Major injuries and insults to Gandhi's gospel seem to be coming from the parasitic crop called Gandhians

Which leads one to ponder how prescient Gandhiji was! He would not trust a "Gandhian" with his own biography, so he approved D G Tendulkar as his biographer It was a radical rupture from idolatrous hagiography It was this same distrust of superstition and dogma that he wanted the Congress dissolved after independence It needs no clairvoyance to see that he rightly envisioned power and its pursuit corrupting the Congressmen as later scams amply proved He would have found a Sitaram Kesri living on Rs 1400 a month in New Delhi, circa 1997, an anachronistic dodo or fossil freak, fit more for a museum than a human habitat Lies and corruption are mutually supportive Gandhi was the last person to have sung hosannas to the Lord for this miracle

Gandhi, the inveterate anti-colonialist, knew in his bones that India was "the most exploited nation on the earth" Empire follows trade The axiom holds The terminology has changed He would have opposed tooth and nail the second wave of global colonialism spearheaded by the US and called it by its real name, as he alone had the knack and the courage to do so The semantic buzz and blur masking the enormity of the TNCs' loot and its concomitant erosion of national sovereignty and cultural autonomy would have failed to deceive him The much touted industrialisation was for him not such a boon to mankind He had remarked

> The industrialisation of one tiny island kingdom is keeping the world in chains

He would easily have detected the ignominy attendant upon one whole continent's industrialisation that has become the scourge of the world, and not only the Third World His radical modernity rejected the notion that the ancient or the Indian was necessarily good

The scandalously prohibitive costs of so-called security for our ruling and retired Prime Ministers and their families is not only a colossal drain, but also a national ,shame Creditably, VP Singh has been fighting for its stoppage And, frustrated, he has even appealed to the Supreme Court, where a decision is pending The national exchequer is being annually depleted to the tune of Rs 56 crores providing them all signal status as "security" It may be consonant with the Congress culture, or the bureaucratic mores—battening on the empty stomachs of millions of fellow Indians Certainly it violates all that Gandhi preached or exemplified

In this regimen it is apt that criminals too belong to the big league enjoying security at the nation's expense—Harshad Mehta to Arun Gawli The people who needed security against them went unprotected, left to fend for themselves Will this state security for them abet or abate crime?

No wonder why parliamentary democracy is so popular It can be bought and sold It is not only the legislators in India who are available to the highest bidder, but also in other much touted democracies of the West, the US no exception Is this the common link between them all? Never mind the aside

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CHARACTERISTIC of Gandhiji, there is a story narrated by Gerard Colby and Charlotte Dennett in *THY WILL BE DONE The Conquest of the Amazon—Nelson Rockefeller and Evangelism in the Age of Oil*, Harper Collins Publishers, New York, 1995, pp 52-57 It was in the days of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact that Nelson Rockefeller visited Gandhiji Since it was his day of silence, Gandhiji, in a written note, told him and his wife to come see him two days thence And they did Gandhiji knew very well who they were, and yet would not budge from his routine After his talk with the Mahatma, Nelson Rockefeller "was swept with the feeling that he had been privileged to witness a rare moment in history" According to Colby and Dennett

> It was Gandhi, a pacifist, who gave young Rockefeller his most stirring experience with the growing power of anti-colonial movements

Is the Congress, or the rump going by this name, aware, even minimally, of this Gandhian legacy of anti-colonialism? Is it awake to Gandhi's denunciation then of the Viceregal Palace as "the waste of money on architectural piles"? Does it know Nehru blasted the "elaborate show" and derided it as "the chief temple where the High Priest officiated"? Had it not been marginalising Gandhi right from the dawn of "independence" so-called, the FIAs and its ilk would not have had the gall to relegate him to oblivion According to FIAs, the Mahatma was not Hindu enough Hence, not patriotic enough Seemingly his hobnobbing with the minorities and Muslims diluted his nationalistic passion

Also, ditching the Mahatma enables the comprador touts reverse his radical blueprint of national regeneration, self-reliance, self-respect, and sovereignty

Ironically, all this becomes starkly evident in the blessed year of a Golden Jubilee, sponsored by New Delhi with such fanfare, with which the people are monumentally unconcerned What a historic moment of delusion and despair! ■

BOOK REVIEW

Liberty or Death

K NATWAR SINGH

India's Journey to Independence and Division by Patrick French, Harper Collins, distributed by Rupa, pages 467, £ 10/50

Three years ago 27-year old Patrick French wrote a splendidly accomplished life of Sir Francis Younghusband, a marginal Raj figure in the early years of this century Whether Younghusband deserved such a good biography is another matter

Patrick French having abandoned the Pamirs, has now ventured into waters that are deep and with strong currents What a task he has undertaken of separating the wheat from the chaff, and putting the jigsaw puzzle of our freedom movment into its proper place and perspective He knows how to linger on a scene and paint a portrait There is no false objectivity here

Yet he is so off-key on Mahatma Gandhi The moral grandeur of Gandhi's life has all but escaped him What a terrible loss for an intelligent and well-meaning author On Gandhi he is shallow, supercilious, even silly He has picked up tittle-tattle about Gandhi's "fads" and even mentions a man called Kavi (page 21) who passed judgement on Gandhi in a language which can only be described as wholly unacceptable and that too on a third-rate TV show

Next we are offered Ved Mehta on Gandhi, French does not even get the title of Mehta's book right—*Gandhi and His Apostles* not *Disciples* And next, of course the deadest of all dead horses, the late lamentable Nirmal Kumar Bose Anything so unoriginal as an offering in 1997 is a let-down Gandhi's life is such an open book that Bose never held any surprises

Let me now turn to the photo on the cover of the book It shows Gandhiji in a shawl and Nehru in a warm Jawahar jacket—obviously it was winter The photo is well known and was taken at Sevagram in 1938 and not at the time of the Dandi March in 1930 as described in the inner flap of the jacket For Dandi, Gandhi wore only his loin cloth—it is warm in March in Gujarat

> If Gandhi is your hero, it can be a deflating experience (p 17)

Really, Mr French? What a blinding insight which would have left Tolstoy, Einstein, Romain Rolland, E M Forster, George Orwell, Martin Luther King and Nehru speechless!

French continues unabashed

> Far from being a wise and balanced Saint, Gandhi was an emotionally troubled social activist and a ruthlessly sharp political negotiator

This is nothing but insensitive cant of a low order and does the author no credit

> Although he never wrote a full length book (p 18)

Who wrote *Hind Swaraj*? (not mentioned in the bibliography)

> Leaving his wife and three sons in India, he sailed to Natal in 1893 He reached Natal at the age of twenty-two and finally left when he was forty-three (p 23)

Gandhi was born in 1869, he did go to South Africa in 1893, at the age of 24 and not 22 That is a matter of elementary arithmetic Gandhiji left South Africa finally in late 1914 He was 45 not 43

> a vague, chunky Punjabi assistant called Pyarelal (p 104)

In fact he was neither vague nor chunky His two books on Gandhiji are indispensable reading for any serious student of Gandhi These do not find a place in the bibliography

> Krishna Menon was a controversial man, despised by many within the Congress hierarchy both as a *playboy* and (p 99)

How ignorant can he be! Krishna Menon a *playboy*! The man lived a life of penury in London for 23 years before 1947 K R Narayanan has said that Menon lived on "tea and antipathy"

> On August 8, 1942, the famous "Quit India" resolution was accepted by the All India Congress Committee despite reservations by Nehru, Azad, Rajagopalachari and many other senior figures (p 153)

The facts are—Rajaji did not attend the August 8 AICC session as he was no longer a member of the Congress The Resolution was moved by Jawaharlal Nehru and seconded by Sardar Patel

French refers to "The Cabinet Delegation" (p 244) It was the Cabinet Mission

The Mission left Delhi on the last day of June 1946

> with Cripps not having bothered to say good bye and died five years later

Not so He died six years later on April 21, 1952 at Zurich after a prolonged illness And he did not attend Indira Gandhi's wedding on March 22, 1942

> Nehru perhaps inadvertantly allowed his underqualified daughter Indira to become Congress President in 1958 (p 263)

I suppose Tony Blair is eminently qualified to be the British Prime Minister having never been even a junior Minister!

And the date 1958 is wrong

On the same page

> Nehru had watched his own mother being beaten by policemen till she bled

The fact is In April 1932, Nehru's mother was badly injured by police lathis Nehru was in jail and has written

> The thought of my frail, old mother lying bleeding on the dusty road obsessed me and I wondered how I would have behaved if I had been there How far would have my non-violence carried me? Not very far, I fear

On the whole the author has done a competent irreverent job He is rightly hard on Churchill and Linlithgow, understanding of Wavell and laudatory about Mountbatten He rescues Lord Louis from the purgatory to which Andrew Roberts had consigned him

On the other hand he may have underestimated the administrative achievement of the Raj—India under the Raj first time governed by one central authority The idea of a nation-state sprang out of the British connection

It is entirely possible that this uneven, patchy, well-written, book might bestow same sort of punditry on the author That would be unfortunate He has already started pronouncing on matters about which he is at best only an interesed amateur ■

COMMUNICATION

Should we Apologise for our Ancestors' Deeds?

In the the wake of demands for apologies by the British Queen for Jallianwala Bagh, I wrote the following letter to various newspapers In *Mainstream* (September 13, 1997) I see another such appeal by Jagmohan Singh and Bharat Dogra Allow me to quote my letter

> The demand for an apology from the British Queen for the atrocities committed in Jallianwala Bagh has received much publicity I wish to draw attention to a certain historic fact It is little known that after the Jallianwala Bagh massacre took place the priests in the Golden Temple offered the *saropa* or robes of honour to General Dyer The following exchange has been quoted by several authors including K P S Gill
>
> > *'Sahib,' they said, 'you must become a Sikh ' The General thanked them for the honour, but he objected that he could not, as a British officer, let his hair grow long Arur Singh [the* Sarbrah *or manager of the Golden Temple] laughed 'We will let you off the long hair,' he said General Dyer offered another objection 'But I cannot give up smoking ' The priest concluded, 'We will let you give it up gradually ' 'That I promise you,' said the General 'At the rate of one cigarette a year '* [Punjab The Knights of Falsehood, *p* 53]
>
> Is the SGPC going to apologise now for what its predecessors did in 1919? It is good Indian manners to invite someone on the condition that he apologises?
>
> Once we start asking for apologies for the past simply because we are descendants of our ancestors, none of us will escape this cat o' nine tails—neither Hindus, Muslims nor Sikhs

This evoked a minor spate of letters in *The Times of India* [As a result one of my acquintances asked me "Have you written anything against the Sardars?"] These letters say variously that the SGPC did not exist then, that Arur Singh was not a Sikh but a Hindu and thirdly that the managers of the Temple were placed there by [and were therefore, toadies of] the British Government All too true But the Temple *was* there and so was its management, which offered the *saropa* to Dyer

I still repeat if we are to be ever apologising for our ancestors or disowning their actions there would be no end to it Just think of the number of things we are doing now, many of them as heinous as the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, for which our descendants shall be apologising in another fifty years!

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Remembering Bhagat Singh

SATYAPAL DANG

Bhagat Singh's ninetieth birthday fell on September 28, 1997 We are belatedly publishing this article in remembrance of that outstanding freedom fighter and martyr sent by the veteran CPI leader of Punjab —Editor

Remembering with reverence and respect martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the country is a sacred duty of the nation, since by so doing, it not only offers tribute to them but is able to redeem itself However, it often happens that with the passage of time, paying homages to martyrs gets reduced to nothing more than a ritual With every passing year less and less attention is paid to the task of getting inspiration from their lives not to speak of studying/recalling their writings/views with a view to learn from them, to apply and implement their ideas which are still valid while excluding those that have become outdated or have not been vindicated by actual developments And this gives an opportunity to misuse and exploit names and hallowed memories of martyrs even by those whose views, practices and objectives are diametrically opposed to theirs (that is, of the martyrs)

The majority of the Ghadar Party martyrs happened to be Sikhs by religion They, however, were secular to the core and firmly believed in communal peace and harmony and in separation of religion and politics However, of late the sacrifices of martyrs and heroes of the Ghadar Party have been sought to be exploited by communal groups including those whose aim is to build a theocratic State

Bhagat Singh is not only one of the countless martyrs of India's struggle for freedom For very correct reasons he is referred to as *"Shaheed-e-Azam"* Even his name has often been exploited by persons whom Bhagat Singh would have fought tooth and nail had he been alive His statue was put up many years ago on the road going to Chandigarh outside his village Khatkal Kalan as per the decision of the then Akali Government Bhagat Singh here is shown as wearing a turban when in fact he generally used to wear a hat (Even though born in a Sikh family, he was clean shaven) Some MLAs expressed the view in the Assembly that this 'distortion' should not have been there Some were even of the view that it was motivated For India's freedom people of the entire country—Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs—made sacrifices In this struggle Punjab and Sikhs undoubtedly played a prominent role However, when 'terrorism was at its height, some persons came out with selective figures to prove' that Sikhs fought for and won freedom for India almost alone And this 'fact' was cited to justify the demand for a Sikh theocratic state Once again the same figures are being quoted by the Akali leaders While Parkash Singh Badal asserts that 80 per cent, if not more, of the total sacrifices were made by Punjabis, Gurcharan Singh Tohra substitutes "Sikhs" for "Punjabis" Nor is this all

Terrorists ("militants" if you like) had gone one step further and sought to justify their terrorism which included killings of innocent persons—old, women including pregnant women, and small children—as well as extortions, rapes, etc by asserting that Bhagat Singh too was a terrorist and that they were following in his footsteps Such a gross misuse of the name of the great martyrs did not evoke the type of universal revulsion and protest that should have come The reason is obvious Bhagat Singh is a hero even today for a large number of young men and women but not many of them have much idea about all that Bhagat Singh and his Bharat Naujawan Sabha stood for

When we remember Bhagat Singh and pay our respectful homage to his memory (and that of his comrades-in-arms) on the occasion of his ninetieth birthday on September 28, let us all pledge to study to have a deep knowledge of the ideas of one of the most radiant gems among our martyrs

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BHAGAT SINGH came from a well-known nationalist family of patriots but went much ahead of them As is well known, he was a revolutionary who was determined to give his life for India's freedom He fought for being given responsibilities which he knew could result in his death However, he was much more than a fearless activist In fact, it was his firm conviction that a true revolutionary must study "to understand the real forces of change" so that he "may be able to answer the arguments and the questions of (his) opponents" He, however, was not a dogmatist His thinking and ideas were developing during the last four or five years of his life He was a voracious reader He read several books while in jail—not only of Marx, Engels and Lenin but also of many other renowned writers He read authors like J S Mill as well as Rabindranath Tagore, Maxim Gorky and Dostoevsky He also read books authored by religious personalities as well as Omar Khayyam Perhaps he had not become a Marxist before he died but he was the first amongst his comrades to be drawn towards socialist ideas

Bhagat Singh was also a revolutionary journalist He wrote a number of articles in *Kirti* of which the renowned revolutionary Sohan Singh Josh was the editor He did so in the name of "Vidrohi" He was developing as a writer too He wrote some books/ manuscripts Except a few, these were unfortunately lost or got destroyed

Bhagat Singh's pamphlet, *Why I am an Atheist,* written at a very young age (he was hanged on March 23, 1931) when he was only 23/24 years old, shows his great intellect

Bhagat Singh became a legend in his lifetime for his brave deeds, his participation in what was perhaps the longest ever hunger strike in jail, for the way he propagated his ideas from the forum of the courts in which he was tried, etc He would have become a bigger legend as a thinker and intellectual, had not his life been cut short According to the distinguished historian, Bipan Chandra, he would have become one of India's tallest leaders

Bhagat Singh, let it be recalled, was strongly anti-communal and

> did not hesitate to express his hurt and annoyance when he found that his mentor, Lala Lajpat Rai, tended to tilt towards Hindu communalism (Bhupindar Hooja in his preface to the book, *A Martyr's Notebook,* edited by him)

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WAS Bhagat Singh a terrorist? He himself answered this question by admitting that he adopted this path in the beginning but soon realised its futility And here is the answer he gave when asked in the lower court what he meant by the word "revolution"

> Revolution does not necessarily involve sanguinary strife nor is there any place in it for individual vendetta It is not the cult of the bomb and pistol By revolution, we mean that the present order of things which is based on manifest injustice must change (quoted in *A Martyr's Notebook*)

Even when Bhagat Singh considered that terrorism might be a vehicle to spread the gospel of freedom, he believed that beyond a cracker show, it had no other value

> Revolutionaries should not indulge in such activities and make futile sacrifices (*Ibid*)

Here is what Sohan Singh Josh says

> Bhagat Singh and his comrades were nationalist revolutionaries to the core who wanted to drive out the British rulers, gain independence and establish socialism in India The British imperialists labelled him and his group as 'terrorists' or 'anarchists' in order to defame them in the eyes of the Indian people They were neither terrorists nor anarchists, as these terms are known in the English language They were most self-sacrificing, most honest and selflessly dedicated to the cause of liberating India (*My Tryst with Secularism* by Sohan Singh Josh—an autobiography)

According to D P Chattopadhyaya, Bhagat Singh had been referred to by Mahatma Gandhi as one

> who has increased our power for winning freedom (Foreword to *A Martyr's Notebook*)

Surely, Gandhi would not have paid this tribute to him if he was considered a terrorist by him

Bhagat Singh, in short, was as far removed from the terrorists of Punjab as the sky is from the earth

Last but not the least, here is something more about Bhagat Singh as a man from Ajoy Ghosh, a comrade of his and also a co-accused, who later on became the General Secretary of the (united) Communist Party of India and died in harness

> Bhagat Singh had none of the characteristics of the traditional terrorist leader He had differences amongst us on many occasions, several of the meetings we held were stormy and more than once Bhagat Singh had to follow a course of action with which he did not agree Impetuous and strong-willed, he lacked the coolness and imperturbability of Azad and would at times fret and fume and lash at those who seemed to vacillate But only seldom did he give offence and whenever he did so he felt mortified and begged forgiveness with such candour and sincerity that one could not bear any grudge against him Of affectionate nature, tender towards ailing comrades, frank and open-hearted, with no trace of pettiness in his make-up, he was a man who claimed the lives of all who were even acquainted with him
>
> What Bhagat Singh had come to mean to our countrymen I realised only when I was out (of jail) "Bhagat Singh Zindabad" was the slogan that rent the air wherever a meeting was held "*Inquilab Zindabad*" the slogan he had been the first to raise, had replaced "*Bande Mataram*" as the slogan of the national movement His name was on the lips of millions, his image in every youngman's heart My chest swelled with pride as I thought of my long association with such a man
>
> Like meteor Bhagat Singh appeared in the political sky for a brief period Before he passed away, he had become the cynosure of millions of eyes and the symbol of the spirit and aspirations of a new India, dauntless in the face of death, determined to smash imperialist rule and raise on its ruins the edifice of a free people's State in this great land of ours ("Marxism and Indian Reality", *Selected Speeches and Writings of Ajoy Ghosh*) ■

Unceremonious Cremation in Punjab

NHRC'S ORDER CHALLENGED BY UNION GOVERNMENT

R M PAL

Matters relating to the alleged mass cremation of victims of indiscriminate killings in Punjab, the abduction of Jaswant Singh Kalra by the Punjab Police, and the writ petitions filed in the Supreme Court on these issues, have now taken an unfortunate turn (The cases are Petition for Habeas Corpus or its nature to produce Jaswant Singh Kalra, husband of the petitioner, Mrs Paramjit Kaur vs The State of Punjab, Director General of Punjab Police, D R Bhatti, IG, Amritsar, Ajit Singh Sandhu, SSP Tarn Taran, and SHO, PS Islamabad, District Amritsar and petition by Initiative on Punjab Committee for Information and Initiative vs The State of Punjab, Secretary, Department of Home, Punjab, DGP, Punjab, SSP, Amritsar and SSP, Majithia In the latter case serious allegations were made about large scale cremations resorted to by the Punjab Police of persons killed in what were alleged as encounters

The Supreme Court was disturbed by the allegations After it received reports from the CBI which disclosed "flagrant violation of human rights on a mass scale", the Court had on December 12, 1996 referred the matter to the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) with the unambiguous directive

> Without going into the matter any further, we leave the whole matter to be dealt with by the Commission

The Court added

> We request the Commission to have the matter examined in accordance with law and determine all the issues which are raised before the Commission by the learned counsel for parties Any compensation awarded by the Commission shall be binding and payable

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EVEN though the Supreme Court directive is unambiguous in that the NHRC is fully authorised to deal with the matter, the NHRC issued notices to all the respondents, and also to the Government of India to raise any preliminary issues they thought relevant In response to this, the respondents raised objections against the Court order on following grounds 1 That under Section 36(2) of the Protection of Human Rights Act 1993 (Act, for short) "the Commission stands denuded of jurisdiction in regard to the matter" [Section 36 (2) reads as follows "The Commission or the State Commission shall not inquire into any matter after the expiry of one year from the date on which the act constituting violation of human rights is alleged to have been committed "] The incidents relating to the cases under reference took place one year before the cases were filed 2 That "any compensation awarded by the Commission shall be binding and payable" would not square with the role of the NHRC which is merely a recommendatory body under the Act

The author, a former Principal of Rajdhani College, University of Delhi, edits the PUCL Bulletin

The police officers (respondents) submitted

> The clear intent of the order of the Apex Court as reproduced above a reference has been made to the Hon'ble Commission to examine the issues regarding alleged violation of human rights specially in the light of the provisions of the Act

The State of Punjab and its agencies contended

> High Court has specifically mentioned about the Act and has entrusted the issue of compensation being determined by the NHRC in accordance with law The matter has been referred to the NHRC as a tribunal functioning under the Act and for making recommendations in accordance with the law which is the Act for the purpose of powers and jurisdiction of the NHRC

The Government of India also maintained that the Court directive virtually tantamounts to the extension of the ambit of jurisdiction of one statutory body, adding "that it may not be strictly in accordance with the constitutional scheme of things"

The NHRC issued an order on August 4, 1997, disposing the preliminary issues and the objections raised The objections have been rejected by the NHRC on the following grounds

With regard to the objection relating to Section 36(2) of the Act, that is, time limitation on the NHRC's jurisdiction, the Commission said that the Supreme Court had designated the NHRC as a body *sui-generis* to carry out the functions and determine issues as entrusted to it by the Court

> The shackles and limitations under the Act are not attracted to this body as, indeed, it does not function under the provisions of the Act but under the remit of the Supreme Court

The Court made the order in exercise of the plenitude of its jurisdiction under Article 32 of the Constitution That, for the parties and NHRC, has the effect and force of law The expression "to have the matter examined in accordance with law" is not necessarily the same thing as "to function strictly within the limitation of the Act" The Supreme Court referred the matter to the NHRC for the protection of human rights As a logical consequence, the powers of the NHRC in carrying out this mandate "are not limited by Section 36(2) or other limiting provisions of the Act"

The NHRC also ruled that in the matter of awarding compensation any recommendation would be subject to the approval of the Supreme Court Which means that any implication of a "delegation" of judicial powers is negated and excluded

The NHRC, while giving the above rulings, took note of the assertion made by its counsel that

> in extraordinary cases involving the violation of the human right to life on a mass scale, as alleged here, it would indeed be a cynical reflection on the great constitutional protections entrenched in the fundamental law of the land, to say that the Supreme Court's power to devise mechanisms for remedial actions is limited by some general concepts of jurisdiction relevant and appropriate only to ordinary civil litigations The great constitutional power and duty cannot be subject to the petty-foggery of civil litigation procedures In India great strides have been made in the field of evolving legal standards for remedial, respiratory, punitive and exemplary damages for violation of human rights

The NHRC also relied on a number of Supreme Court judgments which prescribed strong actions for violation of human rights Relying on these judgments the NHRC's counsel said that "there is an enforceable right to compensation recognised in the public law regime in India"

It may be noted, from the proceedings of the case starting from December 12, 1996 to August 4, 1997 when the NHRC passed the above order rejecting all objections, that our legal system tends to be deliberately misused to cause unnecessary delay, and the maxim, 'justice delayed is justice denied', is not taken seriously by members of the legal profession and much less by the bureaucracy who brief their legal advisors Even a cursory reading of the Supreme Court directives and the NHRC order would indicate that the respondents as also the Government of India unnecessarily relied on Section 36(2) of the Act to build up their objection, they knew fully well that the Supreme Court could not have been ignorant of the provision of this Section Also, they should not have raised any objection to the Court's directive, namely, that "any compensation awarded by the Commission shall be binding and payable" The state should have, in fact, assisted the NHRC in its task—to examine the cases of "flagrant violation of human rights on a mass scale"

Delaying tactics apart, the objections raised are a clear indication of the state's utter disregard for human rights (One wonders why the NHRC issued notice to the Government of India which is not a respondent in either of the cases)

Hopes raised by the NHRC's August 4 order that the cases will now be speedily examined have been dashed by the Union Government which has decided to challenge the NHRC's order in the Supreme Court The government approached the NHRC on September 4 "seeking stay of further proceedings for three months" to enable it to appeal to the Supreme Court The NHRC has accepted the government's request and stayed the proceedings for one month

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THE present case and particularly the action of the Central Government have confirmed two things One, that must be taken note of by the NHRC, civil liberties/human rights groups and activists, relates to our apprehension, expressed before and after the Act came into force, that the Commission might be deployed primarily to deflect the growing allegations of human rights violations by the state and to cover the state's sins under the carpet, and also to some of the objectionable features and provisions of the Act—like the exclusion of the Armed Forces from the Commission's purview (Section 19), reviewing acts of terrorism [Section 12 (e)], the Commission not empowered to grant interim relief—it can only recommend [Section 18 (3)], one year limitation period for filing complaints [Section 36 (2)], and so on Two, that government policies are not made by the political rulers, inflated *babus* are the *de facto* rulers, and Ministers are playthings in their hands In the present case both the Prime Minister and Home Minister—people expected something very different from these two individuals who have been known as genuine progressives—are completely under the sway of the babus of the Home Ministry who are strutting around the country and drawing plans for security measures in insurgency areas, particularly in the North- East 'Human rights' is a contemptible expression for them One of them, as is well known, has been working overnight to bring in TADA in a new garb Both the Prime Minister and the Home Minister, it is widely known, rely on him exclusively for the 'safety' and 'security' of the country How could one, otherwise, explain the government's action in stalling the NHRC's probe into cases involving unceremonious cremation of over two thousand people during a period of two years, and "flagrant violation of human rights on a mass scale"?

Since the present case relates largely to Section 36(2) of the Act, it may be mentioned that the present writer specifically referred to the objectionable feature of this Section in an article in 1993 The late Justice Dorab Patel, the first Chairman of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, also objected to this provision in an article in 1993

> The most dangerous provision is that the Commission shall not enquire into any matter after the expiry of one year from the date on which the act constituting the violation of human rights is alleged to have been committed The worst victims of violation of human rights are the poor who will often not be in a position through fear or other circumstances to report within one year The law will prevent the Commission from doing justice, and this will undermine the credibility of the Commission

How prophectic were justice Patel's words!

The NHRC itself, in its report of 1994-95, had recommended amendment of the Act, to ensure more autonomy to the Commission by being empowered to grant relief to the victims or members of his/her family, and to the one year limitation period The government, of course, has not accepted these recommendations This writer wrote in October 1995

> As one feared, the government has not acted on the recommendations which are gathering dust and the NHRC does not have the courage to press for their acceptance on peril of resignation of its members If it does not put its foot down now, it too, might end up like other Commissions which are mostly sinecures ■

DOCUMENT

India—Fifty Years On

Promise for the Next Millennium

I K GUJRAL

The following is the text of the speech by our Prime Minister at the dinner hosted by the Asia Society (New York, September 23, 1997) during his recent trip to that city for meetings with several world leaders, notably US President Bill Clinton, and delivering his address at the fiftysecond session of the UN General Assembly

I am grateful to all of you for once again extending your hospitality to me and to the members of my delegation

Over the years, I have been a personal witness to the growing interest of the Asia Society in India In several reports on India, sponsored by various think-tanks in the US, I have found the fingerprints of the Society Therefore, I may not be able to add much to the information regarding my country's policies All the same, I will attempt briefly to present my point of view on where we stand today and on our vision of the world, a balance-sheet, if you like, of an ancient country, but a young nation, on the threshold of the new millennium

We are celebrating the golden jubilee year of our freedom An entire nation of 960 million people is celebrating and taking stock of the situation, looking ahead at the future, but also deriving strength from its past Our attempt is to articulate a *vision for the twentyfirst century* in conformity with our needs and our potential In fact, the Parliament of India has recently met in a special session, where, in an unprecedented manner, rising above the din of familiar debate, and transcending party affiliations, both Chambers participated in an in-depth study of the country's achievements and shortcomings At the end of it, the essence of what emerged was a collective reaffirmation of the nation's commitment to democracy, economic growth and social equity, and a peaceful world free of nuclear weapons

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WHEN we try and see what we have achieved, the first thing that comes to my mind is that in all these years, since 1947, *India has not only survived but flourished as a democracy*

Millions of Indians may still be unlettered and inadequately fed and sheltered, but they have all enthusiastically participated in ensuring that democracy takes deep roots in our soil In the last 50 years, 11 polls to Parliament have taken place The elections have been scrupulously fair and largely peaceful The percentage of those voting has been higher than in many democracies of a longer standing Political parties, and a great number of them, both at the regional and national levels, have had the freedom to represent the widest range of opinion across the democratic spectrum The size of the electorate has grown steadily, and at 500 million today, is larger then the entire population of Europe

A notable feature, which may perhaps come as a revelation to some of you, is the institutional strength of democracy at the grassroots levels Starting from the village upwards, there are nearly 250,000 democratically elected local bodies, or Panchayats, manned by over three million elected representatives, who together constitute the *broadest representative base which exists in any country of the world* For the ladies present here, it may perhaps be of special interest to you to know that, by law, women constitute one-third of such elected representatives

An important aspect of our democratic resilience is the ability to adapt and accommodate to changing realities If, in the past, India had seen the preponderance of a single dominant party, the Congress party, today the Indian people have used their democratic prerogative to mandate a coalition government in New Delhi When this happened, many observers, at home and abroad, jumped to the conclusion that India was on the brink of instability and would become ungovernable However, the great democratic experiment in India has had a tendency to confound the doubting Thomases Politics, when moulded by a genuinely democratic system, accurately reflects the new realities on the ground Today, I have the honour to head a government that is distinguished by the direct participation of more then a dozen political parties spanning the entire country These political parties, some national, others regional, cover the largest segment of the political spectrum, and have significantly rectified the earlier imbalance in representation between the north and the south of the country Thus, we have around the Cabinet table, a far more authentic representation of aspirations from all parts of the country It is true that this very aspect of enhanced participation sometimes also requires greater coordination But it is a learning process, and the political leadership in the country is seeking to respect the mandate of the people by fine-tuning the methodology and culture of a coalition form of government

A second aspect is that India must be one of the few recently independent countries *where democracy and economic growth have not been at the cost of one or the other* It is true that certain economic goals can perhaps be achieved faster and more effectively if the right to dissent and the freedom of expression are curtailed Many countries have been enable to resist such a temptation, but in India the democratic spirit has always prevailed even if sometimes it has created, in the short term, its own frustrations as regards the pace and speed of change There is no doubt that we in India have still to do a great deal in the areas of poverty eradication, illiteracy and basic health care, among other priorities But it is also true that a great deal has been achieved in the last 50 years, peacefully and within a democratic framework In agriculture, from a country dependent on food imports to feed its people, India has become, thanks in large measure to the Green Revolution initiated in the sixties, a net exporter of foodgrains Let me also say that we remember your support in modernising our agricultural sector Today, our grain output is close to 200 million tons and we have a grain reserve of 21 million tons We have over the years built up a diversified industrial infrastructure and one of the world's largest reservoirs of skilled and trained manpower I recall that, in 1947, even a sewing needle had to be imported Today, manufactured products are a vital segment of our export basket Our scientists have done our country proud in the frontier areas of space, ocean technology, bio-technology and meteorology, and Indians are breaking new ground in the area of electronics, in particular, software

A third aspect, which I believe should figure in any balance-sheet that we draw up as we look back over the last five decades, is that the *unity of India has triumphed over all the challenges, covert or overt, that have been directed against it* I myself recall that there were several distinguished observers in 1947, and even later, who felt that the unity of India was an artificial construct, an incidental consequence of unintended British benevolence, and that with progress and development, and increased aspirations and expectations, this unity would be overwhelmed by the country's myriad diversities I am glad to say that such a prognosis has been proved to be dramatically wrong There is no doubt that with economic growth and political maturity, the diversities of India have found greater expression But this very assertiveness is a tribute to the success of the democratic process, and its abilities to absorb different pulls and pressures, to harmonise newly empowered sections and often competing demands, and, in so doing, allow the essential unity of the country to revitalise itself by the sheer increase in the quality and range of its representativeness There is a seduction about the Great Indian Enterprise that binds all its people into one essential mainstream, even though a hundred and more tributaries flow into it It was about this indefinable but essential sense of oneness that the great poet-patriot, Subramania Bharati, spoke, when he said

She was three hundred million faces
But one sole life, majestic and strong
Eighteen are her tongues for utterance
And yet, her heart is one

A vital factor underpinning this unity is that *India has remained and will remain a secular state* In terms of religion, the Hindus may constitute the majority in our country, but the founding fathers of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, and other stalwarts of the freedom movement, had decided much before our independence that India must remain a land where all religions must have the freedom of faith and worship The basic premise was that once we accept that nationality goes by religion, we break up the whole concept of India It is a matter of pride that India has the second largest number of Muslims in the world, and all the major religions have their followers in my country

Mr Chairman, my euphoria at some of these achievements of my country may be pardoned, but my faith and pride are born out of personal experience Fifty years ago, my wife and I arrived in New Delhi as refugees from Pakistan Fifty years later, I have the honour of being the Prime Minister of this very country This is the miracle of India, a miracle that has also made it possible to elect this year, as the President of the Republic, Mr K R Narayanan, a distinguished scholar, diplomat and statesman, who, as a member of the then most oppressed social category in my country, had to struggle against the severest odds to even complete his education

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LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, today we stand on the threshold of the new millennium *I, and my countrymen, have a vision for the future,* and I would like to share with you some of the elements that constitute it

In foreign policy, Mr Chairman, one of the fundamental principles that India has always sought to uphold, and will continue to uphold, is to fully preserve her freedom of independent thought and action I know we have been accused by some to be more willing to 'preach' than to 'transact', to unproductively prefer ideology to expediency The fact of the matter is that—and this is something we believe Americans can understand better than most—a country is a product of its own history and experience The way it behaves is moulded by the way it came into being A nation with a 5000 year old history and culture cannot suddenly reincarnate itself as a pliable echo of somebody else's expectations Our freedom was the result of *one of the most profoundly ethical and visionary struggles that history has witnessed* and the principles of our foreign policy cannot but be moulded by that experience Our desire to remain non-aligned was not an attempt, as some people thought then, and may think even now, to carve out a platform of manoeuvrability and leverage for ourselves, but to extend our hard-won freedom to the arena of international diplomacy Once again, I believe, this is an approach which our American friends can fully appreciate, for it was President Thomas Jefferson, who proclaimed the interests of a newly emergent America in these terms

> Peace, commerce and honest friendship with all nations—entangling alliances with none

With this as background, Mr Chairman, the vision of our foreign policy is rooted in our geographical position in South Asia, our initiatives vis-a-vis our immediate neighbours, as a major presence in the Indian Ocean, and as a close and concerned neighbour of the Gulf region and of Central Asia Jawaharlal Nehru voiced India's potential 50 years ago when he said that

> India is so situated that she is the pivot of Western, Southern and South-East Asia

Today, we seek to cement the commonalities and complementarities within South Asia, to strengthen our status as a full Dialogue Partner with the ASEAN nations, to forge greater cooperation among the Indian Ocean Rim countries, to find new ways to increase cooperation to mutual benefit with the Gulf nations, to reinforce our civilisation linkages to Central Asia and to achieve greater understanding with the developed nations

In the South Asian region, we have taken significant steps to implement this vision, and we remain optimistic on the move in SAARC from SAPTA to SAFTA We are aware that we are the largest country in South Asia The population of the other South Asian countries, put together, is less than half that of India, and India's GNP is more than twice that of the combined GNP of our South Asian neighbours But we do not see our size and strength as an instrument to dominate the region, for the simple reason that *we consider it to be in our interest to improve relations with our neighbours* Consequently, in recent times, we have consciously chosen to pursue a policy that is asymmetrical In simple terms, this means that while dealing with our neighbours, we are willing to do more for them than they can do for us Such a policy, which some people have called the Gujral Doctrine, is based on certain principles that require mutual understanding and agreement It asks that relations be founded on good faith and trust, that no country allow its territory to be used against the interest of another country in the region, that none interfere in the internal affairs of another, that all respect each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, and that disputes be solved through peaceful bilateral negotiations

I am happy to say that such an approach, which at least for India is not strictly based on a mechanical calculation of cost and benefit, has paid rich dividends and has already led to a significant strengthening of the atmosphere of trust and co-operation in our region

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An essential part of our vision is the creation of a nuclear weapons-free world, and we hope that this will become a reality in the twentyfirst century, if not even earlier Some people, I know, doubt our faith in such a hope, for they are convinced that India has a nuclear bomb in its basement When misperception is married to prejudice, and the offspring of both is hostility, it is difficult for the truth to prevail The truth is that India was among the first countries since the 1950s to advance the cause of a nuclear weapons-free world We have consistently demanded the halting of all nuclear tests We welcomed the Partial Test Ban Treaty as a first step towards a comprehensive ban on underground tests *For us, a nuclear weapons-free planet is an article of faith* and we have called for global elimination of all nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework We undertook a peaceful nuclear explosion as far back as 1974, but have scrupulously refrained from weaponisation We have not tested after that, while the total number of tests by the nuclear weapons powers has, I believe, been in the vicinity of 2400 India did not sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) because of its inherent flaws, which legitimise the possession of nuclear weapons by a few countries while denying them to others But India has observed the provisions of the NPT even while remaining out of it We have not openly, or in a clandestine manner, helped the process of proliferation Other have, including some of the major nuclear powers When the question of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty was being discussed, we made it clear that we would not accept the Draft unless it contains a pledge by the nuclear powers that they would proceed towards complete nuclear disarmament within a reason able time frame Our views did not get any response leaving us no option but to decline from signing the Treaty in its present form

We are, of course, dubbed unreasonable, but in matters where both our interests and principles are concerned, we have to uphold our point of view I am reminded, in this context, of a rather pertinent remark by George Bernard Shaw

> The reasonable man adapts himself to the world, the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man

I may also point out that India's commitment to nuclear disarmament has persisted even when the strategic situation around us remains a matter of deep concern We are surrounded by nuclear weapons In the East, there is China, a full-fledged nuclear power In the South, there is Diego Garcia, a major American nuclear base In the West, the Gulf region has been nuclearised by alien powers And to the North, the world is aware of Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme which led President Bush to withhold certification as required under the Pressler Amendment In such a situation, Indian security concerns should be understandable May I repeat what I had told this august body last year, that we have no desire to go nuclear unless we are forced to The truth is that we cannot give up our nuclear option unless the world around us is made nuclear weapons-free

I would like to add that whenever a global initiative on disarmament has been genuinely non-discriminatory, India has been among the first countries in the world to support it I have in mind the Chemical Weapons Convention, where we participated actively in the decade-long negotiations and, in keeping with our declared commitment, became on Original State Party In fact, India was elected unopposed as the first Chairman of the Executive Council of the Organisation for Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

Mr Chairman, as the largest democracy in the world, and as a factor for peace and stability in our region, and beyond, *India will continue to play an active role in the more effective functioning of the United Nations,* whose creation must be regarded as one of the most significant achievements of this century We believe that in the efforts for the creation of a New World Order, supported by the twin pillars of peace and equity, the UN must continue to play an effective and pivotal role Our support for the reform of the UN, to make it a more democratic body, and more representative of the aspirations of the developing countries, stems from this premise We have been constructively engaged in a dialogue with other countries on the question of the expansion of the Security Council It is our conviction that on the basis of any global, non-discriminatory and objective criteria—such as the size of the economy, population, support to the principles of the UN Charter, including its peace-keeping operations, and future potential—India's case for a permanent membership of the expanded Security Council is self-evident

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MR CHAIRMAN, I have touched upon some issues of foreign policy that constitute an integral part of our vision for the future May I, before I conclude, very briefly place before you *my vision of the profound changes underway in my own country as it steps into the twentyfirst century* I see an India on the move, proud of its democratic traditions, secure in its unity and seeking to build a new superstructure on the strong economic foundations laid thus far I see an India striving to forge ahead on the basis of institutions which are established beyond doubt the rule of law, an ever-alert media, a vigilant and free judiciary and an executive and legislature accountable to the will of the people I see an India that is changing because its people want change and a better quality of life within their life time, an India which will strive for social equity and education for all, the development of its infrastructure, planned regional development, gender justice and the creation of a scientific temper

I have reason to believe that my vision will be fulfilled more than substantially *I take this opportunity to put at rest all speculation that seeks to doubt the continuation and permanence of the economic reforms currently underway in my country* In a democracy, reforms are an exercise in political persuasion and management, and yet, our direction remains clear as also our determination to deepen the reform process In the last three years, economic growth has averaged seven per cent per year, and if we can sustain this growth for the next decade—and we are determined to—we will succeed in great measure in abolishing poverty, which, in India, must remain the overriding objective of our reforms

Commensurate with our priorities, my government is committed to further deregulating and opening the economy The rupee is stable in a sea of turbulence and full convertibility is on the horizon Inflation is below four per cent annually Foreign currency reserves are comfortable Foreign investment flows are rising, and we believe that we will be able to absorb in the future as much as US $ 10 billion every year The Bombay Stock Exchange has now the largest number of listed companies in the world Our annual output of scientific and technological manpower is close to a quarter of a million and the country is brimming with entrepreneurial skills

There is a developing consensus among economists that South Asia is potentially a region where growth rates will be the fastest in the next 30 years There are estimates that India will emerge as the fourth largest economy in the world by the year 2015 India is also likely to become one of the largest markets in the world with the middle class estimated to be around 500 million by the year 2025

May I mention, in this context, that I had occasion to go through the report of the Study Mission sponsored by the Asia Society on the subject of 'South Asia and the United States after the Cold War' I was encouraged to note that the report recommends that economic relations should be the focal point of US engagement with the South Asian region There are immense opportunities in such an approach for both countries The US is India's largest trade partner and the biggest source of foreign direct investment If our huge emerging market, a strong institutional and legal framework, a professional and entrepreneurial class, and scientific and technical skills are an attraction for the US, the US too needs to be a more easily accessible market for India's exports, and a source for needed technology The basis for an expanding and mutually beneficial interaction is there, and both countries need to seize the existing opportunities

We ask the US and its people to participate in the Great Indian Enterprise The world's oldest and largest democracies have a common sense of inspiration democracy, rule of law, tolerance, equality and non-discrimination coupled with myriad diversities within our respective systems *We strongly believe that these very principles should form the basis of an international order for the future* We remain ready to go that extra mile, to take that extra step and concretise such a world order that would be just, equitable, humane, non-discriminatory and democratic These ideals had inspired Mahatma Gandhi, they imbue the Indian Constitution, and they give us the strength to step into the next century with faith and courage

Thank you ■

Basing 'Scoops' on Phone Tapping

G S BHARGAVA

The Indian Express has made waves with its publication of taped telephone conversations between leading industrialists and others, including Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw in Mumbai and Delhi on what is euphemistically called the ULFA-Tata Tea imbroglio According to the reports featured as lead story by the newspaper on two consecutive days, Nusli Wadia, a Director of Tata Sons and the Chairman of Bombay Dyeing, Ratan Tata, the Chairman of Tata Sons, Keshub Mahindra of Mahindra and Mahindra, and Jayant Malhotra, and industrialist and a Rajya Sabha member of the Samajwadi Party, among others, had exchanged notes on the telephone on rescuing a Tata subsidiary, Tata Tea Company, from prosecution by the Assam Government on charge of financing the activities of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA)

This is a prosaic version of the story which has been sensationalised and blown up, presumably because it involves the largest industrial house of the country As far as the lay reader is concerned, the sum and substance of the recorded conversations is that intense lobbying is afoot with two former Prime Ministers, Chandra Shekhar and Deve Gowda, and the BJP leader, L K Advani, drawn in, to shield the Managing Director of the tea company from implication in the case and also to save the company from further embarrassment and trouble

From the journalist's perspective, it is a 'scoop' of sorts not only because it has been substantially confirmed and triggered an enquiry by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) into the telephone tapping but also because its contents have evoked widespread reaction from corporate circles and lay newspaper readers alike And there lies the rub because scoops' are often motivated and must be checked and cross-chekced not only about their veracity but the purpose of the disclosure as well Especially when the story is the result of tapping of private telephone conversations, even if true, the test of public interest becomes paramount It is more so in the context of the claim of high-sounding national purpose by *The Indian Express*

Despite the introduction and annotation by the newspaper, the text is interesting only in patches Elsewhere it is boring as when Nusli Wadia and Keshub Mahindra recall their past predicaments as accused in criminal cases A Special Secretary in the Union Home Ministry and officials of the Intelligence Bureau also figure in their conversations It seems from the reports that the bugging of the conversation has been done from Nusli Wadia's switchboard because Wadia figures in all the recorded conversations, whether they be with Mahindra, Ratan Tata, Malhotra or Field Marshal Manekshaw

The authenticity of the reports has not been questioned, although Nusli Wadia claimed that 'crucial exchanges' between him and Mahindra 'are fabricated and spliced into the tape' They refer to a Tata Tea Company official, wanted by the Assam Government in the case, being sheltered in a company guest house in Calcutta and the company disowning knowledge of it This is the most incriminating part of the episode and perhaps also actionable Further, while Field Marshal Menekshaw was reported to have claimed that he had spoken to the Assam Governor, Lt Gen S K Sinha, to intercede in the case, the Governor has denied having discussed the matter with the Field Marshal

Against this background, one has to look at the claim of *The Indian Express* that

> apart from providing a hair-raising insight into the world of high-powered lobbying and an extra-constitutional politico-corporate-bureaucratic nexus, the Tata Tapes also underline the rot in our system of governance The real import of the revelations is not what some individuals or organisations have been up to It is instead the breakdown of governance

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ALMOST ten years ago, in July 1988, when the *Indian Express* similarly published accounts of telephone conversations between Ajit Singh, who was the President of the Janata Party, and H D Deve Gowda, then a dissident leader of the party, it ascribed the report to 'Central Government sources' Even if it were so, the morality of the government putting tabs on private telephones and passing on for publication the contents of the recorded conversations never figured in the thoughts of the newspaper On the other hand, it patted itself on the back in an editorial that the genuineness of the transcript had not been questioned

As it happened, the source cited by the report was a red herring because soon after Ramakrishna Hegde had to resign as the Chief Minister of Karnataka owning moral responsibility for the lapse In the present case, according to a report in *The Economic Times*—which has been highlighting the matter reflecting corporate interest in it—

> the tapping could have been the outcome of a business rivalry a couple of names are being mentioned one, an industrial empire, the other, a prominent corporate personality

The *Deccan* Herald version put it more bluntly It said

> The corporate have claimed that the war in the Tata empire as a result of which Mr Ajit Kerkar was shunted out as Managing Director of Indian Hotels Limited is said to be the cause of the latest revelations which may drag Mr Ratan Tata into the imbroglio

There was nothing altruistic in this from the professional aspect of journalists It also quoted the technical opinion of an unnamed telecom engineer

> There are only two possibilities Either someone has deliberately leaked the transcripts or has been bribed to part with them

Again not very edifying

Commenting on the Karnataka telephone incident in 1988, the veteran editor, Nihal Singh, wrote in his column in *India Today*

> While politicians can accept an illegal act if it suits their purpose, the press has a higher responsibility if it is to remain true to its purpose If telephone tapping is wrong it is wrong *per se* even if it means foregoing a scoop

To put it in the present perspective, telephone tapping may be a part of corporate politics but for newspapers to base their 'scoops' on it goes against the grain of the profession ■

Student Politics : Need for Reorientation

JNU—A TEST CASE

RAVI KUMAR

Contemporary Situation An Overview

Today, when the formation of the United Front and subsequent sharing of power by the "Communist Parties" have raised numerous questions regarding the character and prospect of the Indian communist movement, a sort of vacuum is being strongly felt in student politics Call it an assertion of the Rightist ideology or disenchantment with the Leftist ideals, the ABVP has effectively managed to establish itself as a potent force in student politics Except for the ephemeral, but a socially significant (as it further polarised the caste system), anti-Mandal "agitation" (1989), patronised by the conglomeration of Rightists, no other effort to launch a nationwide "agitation" was made after the upheaval of the 1970s Though there were certain student protests against communalism, which emerged on the political scene and was nurtured by the Rightists, the void in student politics could not be filled as these issues were manifested in "demonstrations" or "dharnas" rather than movements or formalised components of movements

Absence of any movement is indicative of certain lacunae on the part of the forces who have always led mass movements—the Communists/Leftists or Socialists The Socialists could not retain the ground they lost after the death of leaders like Jaya Prakash Narayan or Rammanohar Lohia and today they have been marginalised due to deviations which transformed the nature of their politics The leaders of the 1970s have either taken to corruption, like Laloo Prasad Yadav, thereby overturning their previous role, or they have bolstered the support of the communal forces, represented through the *Sangh Parivar*, as was done by figures like George Fernandes On the other hand, the Leftist student organisations, without exception, have fragmented and taken recourse to sectarianism Apart from this serious malady plaguing them, they have eroded their own mass base by becoming cohorts of the so-called Socialists, especially those owing allegiance to the CPI and CPI-M—AISF and SFI At this point they have become oblivious of the fact that

> a part of the bourgeoisie is desirous of redressing social grievances, in order to secure the continued existence of bourgeois society (Marx, Engels 1973 133)

And these forces have always eroded the mass base of the Communists, at present in form of the Centrist formations Moreover, these situations have hardly left any conceptual difference between the organisational and political interests of these organisations

The Communist Parties at the national level have failed to analyse the socio-political crisis confronting the Indian society from the class angle thereby failing to project a long-term solution for problems such as communalism and casteism They could not understand the caste-class nexus dimension of these social trends, being used either to marginalise the mass movements or exploit them as a hegemonising factor Perhaps the

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Communists have failed to analyse the impact of these phenomena in the workplace situation Offering readymade and artificially imposed remedies to solve these problems, like alliances, the Leftists have isolated themselves This has either inflated the transient support for the Centrists or ensured a tilt towards Rightist politics as is being observed today And the most immediate example is their declining membership in strongholds like Bihar

Why JNU?

STUDENT politics requires a different analysis because the situation is different from what it was in the not too distant past The students, termed as the "most responsive section of intelligentsia", do not represent a class but that never implies that they cannot represent particular class interests They have always done so The Leftist student organisations vocalised the interests of the toiling masses and that is why they attracted most of their membership from the downtrodden section

The Jawaharlal Nehru University has been considered a Leftist stronghold in the contemporary period, the reason being the support enjoyed here by the Leftist ideology This support was attributable to the crowd composition that entered this University due to the admission policy that existed here, which awarded various types of "deprivation points" to the students from the backward areas, classes and castes But the character of this JNU started showing signs of degeneration due to suspension of this admission policy in the post-1983 situation Later, by the beginning of the 1990s the situation aggravated further Politically, the saffron brigade won three out of four central panel seats in the Students' Union in the 1996-97 elections Culturally, the democratic institutions, for which the JNU was famous and which were already in a dilapidated state, faced near extinction, as the ABVP had resolved to destroy all those instruments through which the Leftists could assert (Many a time the requisitions for UGBMs and GBMs were turned down flouting the JNUSU constitution for fear of generating debate on certain vital issues) The three most powerful Left organisations—the AISA, AISF and SFI—virtually let the ABVP accomplish this task due to their sectarian attitude which prevented them from coming together

The case of the JNU also offers us a better example of how the students' movement has failed to develop on Indian soil in contemporary times because it is here that we find the increasing strength of the ABVP and weakening of the Leftist monopoly over politics The JNU is an ideal example of an educational institution where the communal forces have openly expressed their discontentment towards its democratic structure by flouting the JNUSU constitution and rejecting the democratic demands of students And the Leftists have narrowed their political interests by confining themselves to mere electioneering, surrendering their wider political interests. It was this University where, when Chandrashekhar was brutally murdered in Bihar, the students came out on the streets and braved the bullets but the SFI openly opposed the movement in the name of safeguarding secularism Then throughout the year the Leftists worked with the ABVP in the JNUSU

Role of Student Politics

'STUDENT politics' cannot be comprehended through applying the generalised categorisations of 'general politics' Remarkably, this 'general politics' in India through its moral degeneration and an uneasing effort to assimilate student politics within its own category has rather tarnished its image because even student politics has come to be identified with politicking and muscle-money power, and this unfortunately is true in a large measure

Students do not represent a class, though they carry within themselves the identifications of their family's social status They want to acquire a much higher social class in a situation as in India, where after graduation and subsequent competitive examinations, they are guaranteed a place in the state machinery, which provides them

> power, influence and financial extortion (Hobsbawm, 296)

And that is why they are more lured by the ideals of being one of those bureaucrats or "executives" rather than being crusaders against inequality and injustice In other words, they come to universities with petty bourgeois aspirations In such situations, it is extremely difficult to break through those aspirations of joining the ruling class or being *servidores* of that class and bring them into the revolutionary fold through, what certain Left student organisations call, the process of 'declassing' them

Any progressive student movement, irrespective of the socio-politico-economic distinctions in regard to the region or times, has assumed a societal significance only when it articulated the needs of the oppressed and became a joint movement of the students and the masses It is so because

> the students alone, however numerous and mobilisable, could not make one alone (Hobsbawm, 298)

History has been a witness that, whether it was the turbulent period of the 1960s and 1970s or the India of the 1970s, when students were massively mobilised by Jaya Prakash Narayan, or the contemporary students assault in South Korea or Latin America, it has been only through association with the working class and peasant movements that the students' movements could assume such tremendous proportions

Today when Leftist politics apparently is being dictated by the liberal capitalists of the Centrist political formations the role of Leftist student organisations has become extremely crucial These student organisations do not have to assert their politics only by capturing the seats of power, though it might force them temporarily into dormancy, because it does not bring about a revolution The aim of a Leftist organisation is always to contribute to the revolutionary worker-peasant struggle This appears extremely difficult to accomplish but in the existing political scenario it will be more beneficial to the mass movements In this respect it is extremely important to note that if we are to list the names of those "great" leaders produced by the JNU, who became a part of the mass struggle, who did not prefer to formulate their party policy from Delhi, only one name comes to mind and that is of Chandrashekhar, who was brutally murdered in cold-blood in Siwan district of Bihar In the same context if we talk of launching any student movement, which cannot be bereft of an ideology, professing Leftist ideology and exposing the forces opposed to working class politics, we must be committed to our political ideals and not organisational interests Though there should not be any conflict between the organisational and political interests of a Leftist student organisation, which is being strongly felt, this conflict dominated the JNU student politics in the wake of the agitation launched after Chandrashekhar's killing This element of sectarian politics combined with absence of any real commitment towards politics was demonstrated primarily by the SFI, which has a formidable strength in the JNU And this factor prevented the agitation from becoming a movement

Student Politics and JNU Lessons to Learn

WHEN the whole society is facing a multi-pronged attack of the bourgeois forces (as Centrists and Rightists) the JNU could not remain an island, away from the increasing influence of the Rightist ideology Thus, today the JNU faces an uphill task of challenging these forces They are contributing actively to the decaying culture and increasing lumpenisation in the campus At this juncture the AISA, AISF and SFI are unable to forge an understanding among themselves to tackle the challenge these forces have thrown up History stands witness to the fact that socially decisive ideological wars among two diametrically opposed forces can never be won through elections and if the Leftist organisations of today think contrary then they cannot sustain for long against these forces

With the JNUSU elections approaching and the Leftists involved in framing "winning electoral alliances" to once again exorcise the spectre of "communalism and fascism", organisational interests are enjoying an edge over political interests And the Left will again be fallaciously projecting the relevance of the JNUSU elections for the whole of India, unaware of the reality that the workers retrenched from various industries due to the Supreme Court order and those innumerable others working for less than minimum wages or the agricultural workers facing twin-pronged attack of the rich peasantry and the callous social structure never get any benefit from the JNUSU elections They have always been oblivious of these developments taking place in bustling South Delhi For them those eloquent speeches will have an appeal only if more than winning elections the leaders could, in some way, join them like the South Koreans did when the workers came with the red *banderas* colouring the streets and plazas

Thus, students will have prominence only if they are a part and parcel of the mass movement and not reduced to instruments for winning elections to be duly photographed in the newspapers At least the politics of Leftist students must steer away from such gimmickry ■

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NIKHIL

Here's the 'Enduring Image'

(Continued from page 3)

several years The Diana affair and her tragic death have made it clear that the authority of the Palace is on the wane and however much we may lavish our courtesies on her gracious Majesty, the evening has cast its shadows on this institution

There was nothing wrong in what Prime Minister Gujral has told his Egyptian interlocutors in Cairo, even if the strict protocol of the Foreign Office has forced him to contradict it. There is no denying the fact that Britain is today "a third-rate power" and to think of it as solving any problem, let alone Kashmir, would be the height of folly on the part of his government Perhaps in his inner assessment, the Queen's visit was inadvisable, at least he was right when originally he had advised against her going to the Jallianwala Bagh If under heavy security, the Queen is constrained to pay homage to the martyrs, it was really ludicrous Officially, it is given out that the royal visit from Britain is to join in the celebration of the fifty years of India's independence, was it not grotesque that her itinerary should include a visit to the memorial at the enclosed park in Amritsar where hundreds died of British bullets seventy-six years ago? That was a memorable landmark of the freedom struggle against the Raj Was it necessary for her to visit that hallowed spot and can it just be a "distressing example" of the British rule in this country? With the taste in her mouth how the common people of this country feels, perhaps the Queen in her senses would not repeat the absurdity of this visit

That really is "the Enduring Image" for the British rule in this country ■

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS (OCTOBER 5-11, 1997)

NATIONAL

October 5

- India's telecommunications satellite INSAT-2D, launched from French Guyana by an Ariane rocket at a cost of Rs 300 crores, is declared inoperable because of a short circuit affecting rural links and broadcasts as well as the functioning of the Mumbai Stock Exchange and private VSAT operators Scientists, however, say the setback is not serious Communication and other services will be resumed with the help of four other satellites now in space
- General Secretary of the All India Forward Bloc and veteran parliamentarian, Chitta Basu, 72, dies of a heart attack on a train while returning to Calcutta after a rally at Patna organised by the 17-party Left and Democratic Front

October 6

- Railway Minister Ram Vilas Paswan announces major changes in the freight structure to offset the hike in diesel price and to generate funds for implementing the recommendations of the Pay Commission
- Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister Dr Farooq Abdullah announces that at his government's request the Army was being withdrawn from some towns including Srinagar and Baramulla
- Union Government denies that any of its agencies had tapped phones or intercepted telephonic conversations of some industrialists in connection with the alleged links between Tata Tea and ULFA
- Mrs Rabri Devi's government shuts down the Bihar Secretariat for another two days as the employees continue their violent agitation and refuse to come to talks

October 7

- The 1200 kg Indian Remote-Sensing Satellite IRS-1D's onboard cameras send excellent images of Trichurapalli (Tamil Nadu) and Allahabad (UP) The IRS-1D is currently circling in an orbit, 590 km at its nearest and 817 km at its highest from the earth
- Assam Governor Lt General S K Sinha (retd) says the transcripts of the tapes, allegedly recording his telephonic conversation with Field Marshal Manekshaw regarding the Tata Tea and ULFA nexus, are fabricated
- CPI and CPI-M, criticise the Railway Ministry's hike in freight charges and lifting subsidies in haulage of foodgrains, pulses, sugar and kerosene saying these will have a cascading effect on the general price situation which will hit the common man

October 8

- External Affairs Ministry's spokesman confirms that a Pakistan High Commission attache, Murad Baloch, is expelled and asked to leave station by October 20, for indulging in activities incompatible with his diplomatic status
- Assam Inspector General of Police N Ramachandran alleges in Guwahati that top officials of Tata Tea had held a meeting with four leaders of the banned National Democratic Front of Bodoland at the Taj Palace Hotel, New Delhi in February
- Union Home Ministry orders a comprehensive CBI probe into the alleged phone tapping of top industrialists, politicians and bureaucrats in the Tata Tea case

October 9

- Interrogations of the officials in the corporate and government sector are reported to reveal that more than 100 Assam Government officers, several tea companies, big business houses and traders in the State provided funds to insurgent groups
- Nuclear scientist Dr Raja Ramanna, recently nominated to the Rajya Sabha, asserts in Pune that in 1974 the "nuclear implosion" at Pokhran (Rajasthan) was an atomic bomb
- Police firing on a mob attacking a police station in Jhajjar (Haryana) kills two and 10 are injured including four policemen
- Two senior BSP ministers of the BJP led UP coalition government, Naseemuddin Siddiqi and Bhagwati Prasad Sagar, directly blame Chief Minister Kalyan Singh and BJP Minister Kalraj Mishra for the killing of two Dalits in police firing in Muzaffarnagar

October 10

- BSP President Kanshi Ram, addressing a press conference in Muzaffarnagar, warns the BJP Chief Minister of UP, Kalyan Singh, that his continuing anti-Dalit policies would jeopardise the future of the BJP-BSP coalition
- Two city buses in Delhi are rocked by bomb blasts at two different places killing/injuring eight people, two of them seriously
- 43 people are injured as the superfast Sachkhand Express from Amritsar rams into a shunting engine at Sahenwal station near Ludhiana and another train hits a tractor trolly near Ahmedgarh on the Ludhiana-Dhuri section killing the tractor trolley driver
- All Bodo Students' Union refuses to be a party to the joint working group set up by the Union Government and announces its decision to launch a vigorous mass agitation in November in support of a separate Bodoland

October 11

- PIB releases Prime Minister Gujral's letter to all the Chief Ministers about his US visit and informs that the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan "did not approve of the use of the UN forum" for propaganda by Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and attacking India in his address to the General Assembly
- Dr Homi N Sethna, Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission (1971-1986), refutes Dr Raja Ramanna's assertion that the 1974 Pokhran implosion was an atom bomb To be a bomb, Dr Sethna says, the device has to have a shape and a delivery system, while the 1974 device was just a ball and India had a neither rocket nor an aircraft capable of carrying and dropping an atom bomb
- Counting on a reported readiness of some 24 BSP MLAs to walk over to the BJP, Chief Minister Kalyan Singh asserts that the BJP will not be wiped out if even the BSP withdraws from the coalition

INTERNATIONAL

October 5

- *Beijing Review* highlights the disclosure made by the German media that Heinrich Harer, a tutor of the Dalai Lama in the 1940s, was a Nazi and says the spiritual leader of Tibetans "fell prey to certain influences of the Hitler regime"
- Prime Minister I K Gujral unveils a statue of Mahatma Gandhi at the source of the river Nile in Uganda
- President Suharto warns that Indonesia could face more violent unrests and tells the military to be prepared to deal with any outbreak of internal conflict
- Pope John Paul II, on a visit to Brazil, tells a 140,000 crowd in Rio de Janeiro "The family is the patrimony of humanity " and "abortion is an abominable crime, shame of humanity"

October 6

- Leader of the National Democratic Party Surya Bahadur Thapa presents his petition to King Mahendra, claiming support of 107 legislators in the 205-seat Lower House of parliament, and is appointed the Prime Minister of Nepal
- London based group Friends of Kashmir and the all-party British Parliamentary Kashmir Group jointly invite 37 prominent activists from Jammu & Kashmir and Pakistan occupied Kashmir to a conference later this month to discuss a solution of the Kashmir issue
- Prime Minister Gujral, speaking at a function in Kampala (Uganda), affirms that "Kashmir is an unbreakable part of India" and other countries "need not worry" about the activities of militants
- Chief of the Israeli secret service MOSSAD Dany Yatom admits it was he who had ordered assassination of Palestinian leader Khaled Mashaal by two agents who went after him to Jordon with faked Canadian passports The botched attempt at murder infuriated King Hussein of Jordan and the Canadian Government and Israel had to release Sheikh Yassin and 22 others to secure the release of its two agents

October 7

- Pakistani scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan discloses in Islamabad that Pakistan was working to develop a smart bomb, capable of tracking down targets, dodging dummy missiles and attacking tanks and armoured personnel carriers
- Defence Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav during his visit to Russia calls on President Boris Yeltsin who assures the former "Our relations are such the we have no problems "
- Queen Elizabeth II, accompanied by her husband the Duke of Edinburgh, arrives at Islamabad on a six-day state visit to "underline the dynamic modern relationship" between the two countries
- Prime Minister Gujral addresses the South African Parliament, criticises nuclear powers for their bid to retain their monopoly and declares that India would work closely with South Africa to mobilise global opinion to eliminate nuclear weapons within a time-bound framework
- Italian Communist leader Fausto Bertinotti refuses to have any deal with Prime Minister Romano Prodi over budgetary proposals which envisage drastic cuts in pension and welfare allocations meant to reduce deficit to three per cent of the GDP and enable Italy to enter Eurocurrency

October 8

- Queen Elizabeth II addresses the Pakistan parliament and asks India and Pakistan to set aside their "historic differences" and work together for peace and development in the region
- US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright takes steps to block US assets of 30 foreign groups identified as terrorist organisations Among these groups are Harkat-ul-Ansar of Pakistan and LTTE of Sri Lanka
- British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook tells Pakistani journalists in Islamabad that he would take up the Kashmir issue with India as his country "has a responsibility to resolve this dispute"
- NATO troops are deployed in Bosnia to prevent possible violence between rival police factions in Bosnian Serb-controlled territory

October 9

- Italian playwright and actor Dario Fo wins the 1997 Nobel Prize for Literature
- Moscow daily *Segodnya* reports that Indian Defence Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav, on a five-day visit to Russia, has finalised a new $ 2 5 billion defence deal with Russia taking the total past and new deals to $ 8 billion covering the period ending 2000
- Nepal's Prime Minister Surya Bahadur Thapa wins the vote of confidence with 109 votes in a House of 205
- Pakistan denies that Harkat-ul-Ansar, an outfit declared terrorist by the US Administration, operates from its territory
- President Fidel Castro of Cuba opens the Congress of the Cuban Communist Party with a wide-ranging report lasting nearly seven hours

October 10

- 1997 Nobel Prize for Peace goes to the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and its American Coordinator Ms Jody Williams The cause, supported by the Late Diana, Princess of Wales, is frowned upon by the Western powers, including the USA, who refuse to sign a treaty banning the use of landmines
- A Sri Lankan official announces in Colombo that the UN has awarded $ 48 9 million in compensation for losses incurred by Sri Lanka citizens during Iraq's occupation of Kuwait in 1990-91
- Israelis demonstrate outside the Jerusalem residence of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu calling on him to resign to keep the country out of a war
- Hurricane Pauline floods the streets of Acapulco in Southern Mexico 122 persons are killed and a Dutch flagged ship with 2000 passengers on board is reported missing after leaving Acapulco harbour just before the hurricane hit the port town

October 11

- Prime Minister Gujral and Egypt's President Hosni Mobarek, during their meeting in Cairo, express concern at outside interference in Afghanistan and vow to oppose any partial or selective expansion of the UN Security Council Both the leaders stress the need to strengthen the non-aligned movement
- Pakistan daily *Frontier Post* reports that the Islamic clergy criticised the top leadership of the country in their Friday Sermons for the "un-Islamic" gesture of extending enthusiastic welcome and for telling Queen Elizabeth II that Pakistan was the outcome of the enlightened policies of Britain
- Jordan breaks off security cooperation with Israel over the attempted assassination of Hamas leader Khaled Mashall by MOSSAD agents holding fabricated Canadian passports
- Cambodian King Norodom Sihanouk expresses his disdain at the country's affairs and says were he not a Buddhist he would have committed suicide ■

Posted at CPSO in New Delhi on October 17/18, 1997 **Delhi Postal REGD No DL-11037/97**
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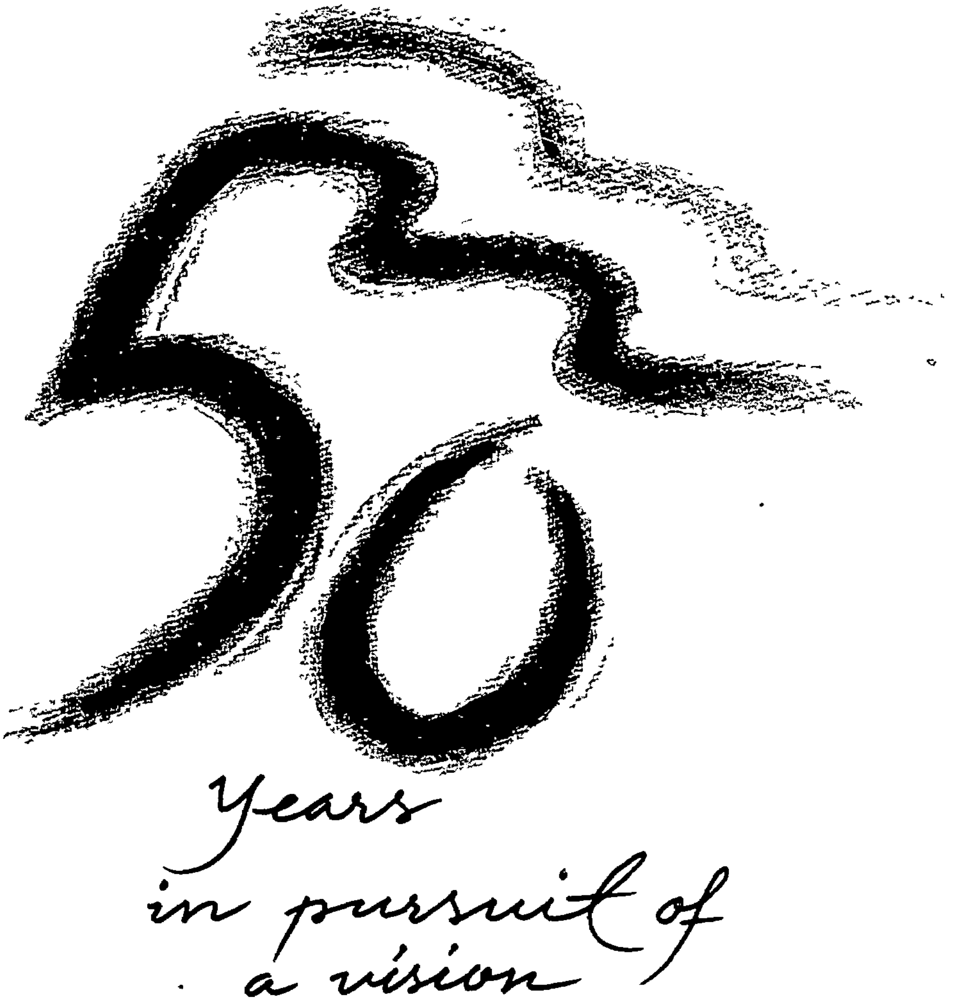

It was vision that made our freedom possible Then began a journey to fulfill that vision It's been uphill, all the way But we carried on And progressed Today, we can look back at the journey we've completed with pride And at the one ahead with hope

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CONTRACT ITC 158/97

Edited and published by Sumit Chakravartty *for* PERSPECTIVE PUBLICATIONS PRIVATE LTD, 1E/12, "Sewak House" (First Floor),
Jhandewalan Extension, New Delhi-110055 Tel 7516763, 7516893 *Printed at* NEW DELHI PRINTERS, 20/7 Old Market,
West Patel Nagar, New Delhi-110008 *Editor* Sumit Chakravartty *Editorial Adviser* Nikhil Chakravartty
General Manager Praveen Mehta *Executive Manager* Jasjit Kay Nagra

Mainstream

OL XXXV No 46 October 25,1997 Rs 7

Salute to President

SATYAPAL DANG

Akali-BJP Government in Punjab : A Balance-Sheet

SWARAN SINGH

U-turn in Sino-US Ties?

VANDANA SHIVA

Coastal Communities' Celebration of Golden Jubilee of Independence

SARASWATI HAIDER

The Hapless Indian Girl Child

"ZHAO ZIYANG ASSERTS IN JIANG'S CHINA" :
EVALUATION OF CPC CONGRESS
BY RAVINDRA SHARMA

Salute to President

What has happened in the country's most populous—and perhaps the most important—State is utterly disgraceful for our parliamentary democracy The attempts by the Samajwadi Party and its allies to foil the proceedings of the UP State Assembly once it was as clear as daylight that the BJP Chief Minister had been able to garner sufficient support from various groups to enjoy an absolute majority in the House culminated in unprecedented violence Braving that violence accompanying one of the the worst bedlams in the annals of our legislative history Kalyan Singh was able to demonstrate his majority in the most convincing manner on the floor of the legislature Which is why there was no earthly reason to recommend the dismissal of the State Government as also imposition of President's Rule in UP and the dissolution of the State Assembly And yet displaying rank partisanship which he has exhibited in abundance on several occasions in the past, UP Governor Romesh Bhandari did just that by taking shelter behind the specious plea that the law and order machinery in the State had collapsed, a contention tha cannot stand the test of close and impartial scrutiny

Bhandari's is an outrageous move and a direc invitation to lawlessness It is indeed shameful tha Mulayam Singh Yadav, the SP supremo who is currentl the country's Defence Minister, and Sitaram Kesri, wh heads the present-day Indian National Congress whic once was the locomotive of Indian independence, hav connived with Romesh Bhandari in this nefarious ac that strikes at the very foundation of the nation' democratic edifice It is all the more reprehensible tha the CPI-M under the stewardship of Harkishan Singl Surjeet has wilfully chosen to be Mulayam's activ accomplice in this pernicious game which has place the ruling United Front at the Centre on a precipice an brought the country on the brink of destabilisatior Regrettably Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral ha buckled under the formidable pressure of the Kesri Mulayam-Surjeet trio and, instead of standing by CP leader and Union Home Minister Indrajit Gupta' principled opposition to the move, accepted the deman for Central Rule in UP

In this murky scenario what has stood out is th President of India's bold decision to send back th recommendation of the Union Council of Ministers fo a review This is doubtless unique in India's constitutiona history For this wise act on his part K R Narayana deserves the wholehearted acclaim of all those wh have the interests of the country at heart and ar pledged to safeguard its democratic ethos Th assumption of a personality like K R Narayanan—wh had to suffer untold hardships to complete his educatio on account of being a member of the most depresse section in society—to the highest office of the land wa in itself a tribute to Indian democracy He is nov proving his worth as its true guardian by his displa of extraordinary objectivity and uprightness And thi at a time when the country has been besieged by bunch of unprincipled yet influential, petty crooks an gangsters parading as the people's representatives an occupying prominent seats of power at the Centre an in the States

The battle to preserve our democratic heritage ha now begun in right earnest In this long-drawn struggl we need figures of substance like Narayanan—and no the men of straw we come across so often in the politica arena—to steer the country through the rough seas i is passing today

October 22 S C

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Effecting a U-turn?

SWARAN SINGH

Having consolidated his political power during the recently held Fifteenth Party Congress President Jiang Zemin of China is scheduled to undertake his first visit abroad from October 28 to November 3, 1997. This happens to be his first state visit to the United States, where in addition to Washington DC, he is also scheduled to visit six other US cities which include Honolulu, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, New York, Boston and Williamsburg. If anything, this itinerary very much reflects the spirit of a similar historic visit by his mentor Deng Xiaoping who, having consolidated his power at the third Plenary of the Eleventh Party Congress, had paid a similar long-drawn visit to the United States in 1979. Now whether or not President Jiang will also be seen mixing with crowds and donning a Mexican hat remains to be seen.

To start with, the summit clearly completes the U-turn in the United States' policy towards China and projects how these two countries have come a long way since their virtual diplomatic freeze following the Tiananmen Square crisis of 1989. The process has taken nearly a decade and especially beginning from 1993-94, high-ranking officials have frequently exchanged visits to each other's country with Vice-President Al Gore becoming the highest US dignitary to visit China in March this year. Strong speculations have also been repeatedly made on President Clinton's visit to China and as of now he is expected to reciprocate to President Jiang's visit and travel to China sometime around March next year. Even the current visit by President Jiang Zemin has been preceded by hectic activity on both sides including a series of high-level visits by US officials to Beijing. Among others these include the US Secretaries for State and Commerce and the National Security Adviser to the President, the Governor of Washington State and the Chairman of the Boeing Corporation.

All this groundwork had become necessary considering that following China's suppression of the pro-democracy movement of 1989 a large number of dissidents had obtained asylum in the US and various other Western countries. Accordingly, the US public as also its leadership could not be made ready, for a long time, to offer Jiang the highest courtesy of a state visit. Also, the etiquette-conscious Chinese were hardly willing to compromise on these issues. Later, the controversial "private visit" by Taiwanese President Li Teng-hui to New York in June 1995 and the US decision to despatch its aircraft carrier forces to the Taiwan state to counter Chinese missile attacks during Taiwan's Presidential elections in 1996 further delayed an early state visit. Besides, there were many other ongoing bilateral issues which had to be resolved considering the expectations that were likely to be raised following an announcement of the Sino-US summit.

Dr Swaran Singh is Research Fellow with the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi

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EVEN now, going by the current reports both sides have their long list of issues each of which is expected to obtain a breakthrough decision during those few hours of the Jiang-Clinton summit on October 29 (1997) much of which, however remains to be consumed by their formal appearances for the public and the press. And during those few hours put together, the two leaders are expected to deal with issues like resolving their trade imbalance, reviving their nuclear cooperation agreement, clarifying US policies regarding Taiwan, China's membership in the World Trade Organisation and on the part of China to explain its stand on various issues like human rights, nuclear proliferation and intellectual property rights. The two sides are also due to sign various documents like some sort of undertaking that in future their navies will not be attacking each other. Obviously, not all of these issues can be resolved to the satisfaction of both sides. Also the nature of various decisions and their implications will not be known for a long time to come.

However, the level of personal rapport amongst

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the two leaders is one thing that should give tremendous confidence to both sides Both Jiang and Clinton are believed to having evolved sufficient personal chemistry and commentators generally describe them as two who are not expected to strictly go by their official briefs as they did in some of their initial meetings Despite this being President Jiang's first official summit to the White House, the two leaders have already met at least four times during the last four years (See Table) In fact, it is their well-known rapport that has also given rise to speculations about major announcements that are likely to be made during this forthcoming summit However, this media hype has partly resulted from the commitments of both sides to make this summit a success, much of this can be gauged from the seriousness with which both sides have continued to make desperate efforts until the last minute

Jiang-Clinton Meetings

Date	*Venue*
November 19, 1993	During the APEC Summit at Seattle (USA)
November 14, 1994	During the APEC Summit at Bogor (Indonesia)
October 24, 1995	During fiftieth anniversary celebrations at the UN
November 24, 1996	During the APEC Summit at Manila (Philippines)
October 26, 1997	First state visit to White House (Washington, DC)

Besides, domestic factors have continued to dictate the nature and scope of discussions as well For President Clinton, for example, this summit also marks the launch of his Presidential election year and to make it a success the White House has gone to the extent of completely defying the Congress which stands united on placing strict conditions before any initiative is made towards reviving Sino-US cooperation The opposition of the Congress leaders has been partly geared towards similar goals though across the board many leaders have strongly criticised the reports that Clinton is likely to announce revival of the 12-year Sino-US Agreement on Nuclear Cooperation of 1985 which had been held up following a Congressional legislation making its implementation subject to the President certifying that China was not supplying nuclear or missile technologies to unsafeguarded destinations The President seems determined to certify China's responsible non-proliferation behaviour and to reopen supplies of US nuclear reactors and other technologies to China

China remains equally concerned and expectations back home which have been running high at seeking resolution of issues like Washington's dubious relationship with Taiwan which has once again become the focus of its domestic debate following the recent US revision of its defence arrangements with countries like Australia, South Korea and Japan At the level of public pronouncements, China has particularly emphasised on the need to rectify US relations with Taiwan and stressed the need to replace their Shanghai Comunique of 1978 which defines US relations with the island which China regards its renegade province However, considering that Jiang has just stage-managed his success at the Fifteenth Party Congress, the Chinese side does not appear as desperate for the success of this summit At the least they will be happy to obtain a date from Clinton on his visit to China and a commitment that the remaining issues will be discussed further at their next summit

Also, the trade surplus with the Chinese provides them tremendous leverage in dealing with the United States While the Chinese statistics on trade surplus do not include the trade through Hong Kong and put the figure at $ 10 billion, the US official estimates have put it at $ 44 billion for 1997 The business lobby in the United States has been pressing the Clinton Administration to try both pressure and engagement to accelerate China's opening up This also seems to be one important reason why President Clinton plans to certify China's responsible non-proliferation behaviour and allow American companies to supply nuclear technologies to China According to Marvin Fertel of the Nuclear Energy Institute, the potential of these exports to China between now and 2010 amounts to obtaining new orders worth $ 15 billion and creating about 225,000 job years of work Similarly, the Chinese are expected to place order for about 30 Boeing aircraft and other items worth $ 2 to 3 billion But this trade imbalance also compels Washington to keep blocking China's entry into the World Trade Organisation and ask for rapid dismantling of its tariff and non-tariff barriers to its markets

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THEREFORE, to cite one most important factor, trade today has come to be the single most important determinant of all these policy postures from both sides, This trend, in fact, can be observed right from the early 1990s If the US has since used trade sanctions to obtain political concessions or implement its other foreign policy objectives, China has also gradually learnt how to exploit its market as a weapon at the negotiating table China has repeatedly placed big orders following improvements in Sino-US relations and diverted these orders to Germany, France or Russia whenever there is any clash of interests Even currently a large Chinese business delegation led by their Vice-Minister for Foreign Trade, Sun Zhenyu, and Vice-Minister of the State Planning Commission, Zeng Peiyan, is travelling throughout the United States and is expected to sign major deals in purchase of aircraft, foodgrains, fertiliser and car parts This placing of orders worth billions of dollars on the eve of this summit can in no way be described as either incidental or unintended

As regards India, the US behaviour and responses while dealing with Prime Minister I K Gujral's recent visit were surely dealt at a different level But making such comparisons is perhaps immaterial and might lead to misleading conclusions In short, bilateral relations should not be gauged through a friendly country's ties with its other friends and foes But considering the current power status of both the United States and China, the Jiang-Clinton summit on October 29 is sure to have its impact on the future of China's neighbours And here, this increased Sino-American rapprochement, especially the US decision to overlook China's supplies of nuclear and missile technologies to countries like Iran, Syria and Pakistan have obvious implications for India's security and peace in the coming years Amongst the other immediate outcomes the infusion of advanced technologies is also likely to only further improve China's weapons production infrastructure as also its weapons exports to the Asian nations This Sino-US rapprochement in a way also amounts to the US recognition of China as a major actor which in the long run will greatly facilitate China's rise as a superpower Part of this can be seen in the way the Chinese leaders have been trying to utilise this summit in promoting a slogan where the most important item on their agenda for their forthcoming summit is the effort to redefine Sino-US ties for the next millennia ■

IMPRESSIONS

Gujral's "Rewarding" African Sojourn

VK. MADHAVAN KUTTY

"Rewarding" was the expression Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral chose to describe his latest sojourn on his return after a visit to Tanzania, Italy and New York (UN) last month and after his tour of Uganda, South Africa and Egypt early this month While returning from "the six-nation" tour a senior colleague was heard observing that Gujral is really good at handling foreign affairs, adding that as the Prime Minister heading a 14-member coalition at the Centre is not an easy task A kind and understanding compliment

Prime Minister Gujral has reasons to claim that his New York visit was rewarding because he got an assurance from the US that it did not want to interfere in Indo-Pak relations and Washington was keen to strengthen bilateral (now termed "strategic") relations After the contents of the talks with President Clinton were known, the controversy and apprehensions that Gujral's preponement of his New York trip generated in India cooled down In his talks with Pakistan's Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, substantive matters were not taken up and an understanding was reached that the ongoing Secretary-level talks would continue In the speeches Gujral made at the UN, Asia Society and Council on Foreign Relations, he spelt out clearly India's stand on issues like CTBT, Kashmir and globalisation indicating that India has not yielded on any of these issues In Kampala, President Musaveni amply demonstrated Uganda's interest in strengthening ties with India as was the case with Tanzania South Africa and India agreed that it is time to transcend historical and emotional ties by giving an economic thrust and meaning to bilateral relations with a long-term perspective The fact that Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak has shown interest in issuing a Delhi Declaration when he visits India shortly incorporating the two countries' views on regional and global matters and his interest in India and Egypt taking a joint initiative to revive the NAM is a meaningful development Therefore, the Prime Minister can legitimately claim that his 'six-nation' trip was quite rewarding

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In all these countries, one question the leaders were asked related to India's candidature to the permanent seat in the UN Security Council Speaking for South Africa President Mandela said "We are not canvassing for it" During his visit to New York, Gujral said India is a candidate There is no doubt that any criteria that is evolved would automatically make India qualify for the seat But, of late, it is felt that India also is not openly canvassing and her right cannot be overlooked Most of the responses from leaders of these countries with whom the Prime Minister had talks conformed to the pattern "it is too early", "let the basis be decided first" or "when the time comes we shall take it up"

But the common refrain was that all of them agreed that there is need for UN reforms in order to make it more democratic All of them also felt that there is no hurry Anyway, the question of Security Council membership calls for wider discussions on the basis to be evolved than a particular country's seat India's claim is not questioned But what is needed now is to evolve a criteria so that one power or some powers together do not get an opportunity to manipulate the world body, as has hitherto been done

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WHILE in Africa another question visiting journalists often asked South Africans of Indian origin was "Where do you come from Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Bihar?"—This was done probably to trace their Indian origin The replies were always "We are South African " Relevant answers to irrelevant questions The psychology behind the question was noticed and it is high time not to think on those lines His ancestors may have come from Poland, Greece, Spain or Germany, but one does not ask an American where did he come from originally Ancestry and roots are important for an individual, but for a citizen it is a different matter What is to be understood is that they are people of Indian origin and not South African Indians As early as in 1960 Nehru had declared that the question of the people of Indian descent in South Africa had merged with the larger question of the oppressed in that country It was in this spirit that India and the people of Indian origin in South Africa identified themselves with the struggle against apartheid That has to be kept in mind

Gujral never failed to mention that India and South Africa fought together against colonialism and apartheid even before India became independent He also described his visit as a 'pilgrimage' and a 'voyage of discovery' He paid tributes at all places where the Mahatma was made, whether it was Pietermaritzburg, the Phoenix Settlement, the Tolstoy Farm, or the Johannesburg Fort where Gandhiji was imprisoned Gandhi's work in South Africa produces unforgettable links between the two countries and there is a need to remind of these links Forty years ago, speaking at the UN, India's representative, VK Krishna Menon, expressed the hope that

> one day South Africa will belong to all of whom that country belongs and will break the bonds that binds them and become citizens of a civilised humanity

"We hope," he said, "that we shall be able to establish with them unbreakable bonds of friendship and fraternity" Looking further ahead and anticipating a future basis of cooperation, Menon with vision and foresight had also stated "We are two countries in the lap of the Indian Ocean "

The visit, as the Joint Communique—symbolically released at Pietermaritzburg Platform, where Gandhiji was thrown out of the first class train compartment—stated, would "strengthen and provide impetus to their multi-dimensional political, developmental, economic, commercial, defence and cultural links in their common endeavour to build a more just and equitable world"

There is a country within the country in Africa While strengthening the age-old ties this factor cannot be overlooked Gujral observed in his speech to the South African parliament, that the

> policy of reconciliation which forms the bedrock of the new South African nation is unique in both its capacity to forgive, and its ability to bridge the divide between a confrontational past and a forward-looking and cooperative future

President Musaveni had some reservations and misgivings about India when he assumed power as he thought India was close to the ousted President, Obote But the fact that he allowed all the Indians who were thrown out of Uganda by Idi Amin to return and paid them full compensation and also the fact that Indians are participating in building up the Ugandan economy prove that Uganda is keen to re-establish its ties with India in a much stronger way President Musaveni represented the new type of emerging leadership in South Africa which believes that South-South cooperation is essential in today's world, which is increasingly influenced by globalisation and liberalisation

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EGYPT's interest in reviving the NAM was evident during Gujral's visit too It was felt that Cairo was indifferent, especially after it started moving towards the American camp a few years ago But Egypt's suggestion that India and Egypt should take joint initiative to revive the NAM and its interest in issuing the Delhi Declaration, incorporating the regional and global views of the two countries, is indicative of a change It may be too much to expect a return to the heady Nehru-Nasser era of relationship, but there is definitely a change in the hitherto witnessed state of relations And Prime Minister Gujral can be elated about it

Bilateral visits are always successful The leaders talk about historical ties, cultural bonds and possibilities of bilateral cooperation in many areas, etc But the real success of such visits can be assessed only after a period How far the promises and expectations could, and would, be translated into action will ultimately decide it One should be able to say it is "rewarding" then as well ■

Reflections on Quality of Governance

H.K. DUA

No one really knows what led Inder Kumar Gujral to state in Mewat in Haryana last week that he is not in favour of using the Armed Forces for domestic purposes and that their essential role is to defend the nation's borders. It is, nevertheless, important considering that for the first time a Prime Minister of the country has shown awareness of the sensitive nature of the issues involved.

By repeatedly seeking the help of the Armed Forces for sorting out domestic mess during the last fifty years, successive governments at the Centre and in the States have admitted their ineptitude in managing the country's internal troubles politically. In the process, the politicians as well as the civil administrators have placed additional burden on the Armed Forces.

Left to themselves, the Armed Forces would not like to be given the tasks which should be tackled politically or handled by the police forces if law and order has broken down. On several occasions, senior Generals have cautioned the government against calling upon the Army too often to perform the tasks which the civilians should ordinarily be handling. Such urgent demands on men in uniform—which they have dutifully met—play havoc with their training programmes and distract their attention from the borders they are supposed to defend.

It is not that the Armed Forces can be kept totally aloof from what is happening in the country. The Constitution as well as the Armed Forces' charter permit the civil authority to call for their help in case it has failed to tackle a situation with means available to it. The question involved is not that of law but the ability of the rulers to manage the affairs of the nation politically and providing governments that know-how to function effectively and with skill to anticipate and some wisdom. The name of the game is political management—an area in which successive governments have over the years shown palpable incompetence and lack of vision. Recourse to the Army's assistance again and again itself should have alerted the politicians and the civil administrators about their own inadequacies and made them take remedial measures, but there are no signs to be noticed for such an exercise.

Punjab, Kashmir, the North-East, the 'Blue Star Operation' in Amritsar, the 1984 riots in Delhi, the 1993 riots in Bombay, frequent communal riots, the inter-caste wars going on in some States and the entry of criminals and crooks into politics do not speak highly of those who have been managing the country over the years.

The Army has been used in many parts of the country for reasons avoidable or otherwise. A chunk of the Army is deployed for defending Kashmir against Pakistan which has caused three wars on the sub-continent and a continuing proxy war, another is tied up in the North-East where insurgencies have made demands on the energies of men in uniform. Admittedly, no country can allow another to slice away Indian territory or misguided groups to demand secession. Political rulers, however, owe it to the nation to take steps much in advance so that the need for seeking the help of the Armed Forces does not arise.

The erosion of the civil authority in the districts and at the State level and the collapse of the police administration in many parts of the country have at times become responsible for the need to summon the Army. Why cannot, for instance, a Collector anticipate that tension between two communities in his district would lead to a riot and take pre-emptive steps? The local MP or an MLA would also know where the trouble can come from, but would often choose to ignore the early alarm or might even think of encashing the situation for enlarging his vote-bank, unmindful of the consequences of what he has done.

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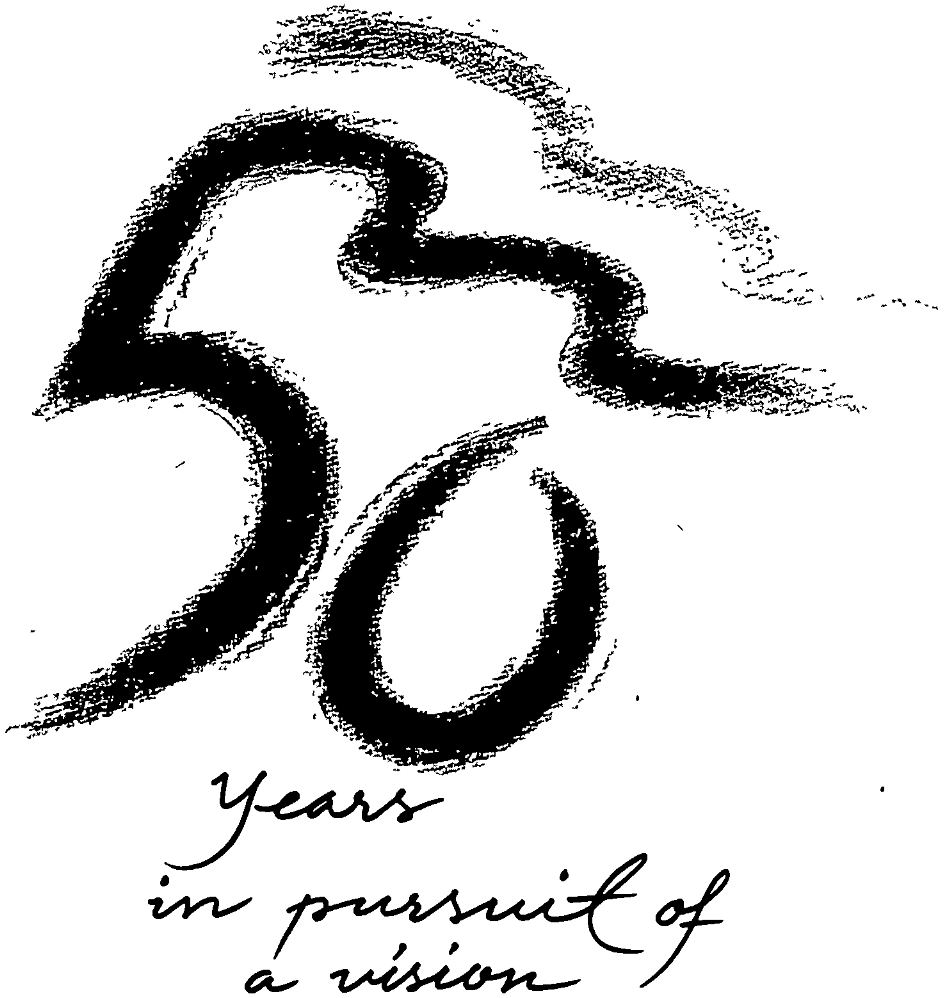
THE civil and police authorities apart, political rulers cannot be absolved of the blame for mismanaging the affairs of the nation. Free India was born with massive problems and the responsibilities of the new rulers were enormous. The country was to be kept united, communal peace maintained, caste rivalries fought, poverty ended and jobs created. The nation had to be given a sense of direction and democratic institutions and instruments of governance created to match its needs. Rightly, expectations of the people armed with adult franchise soared alongwith the population, straining resources. The rulers should have kept up with the rising demands and used power as an instrument to meet them. With some exceptions, they, however, have

(Continued on page 33)



It was vision that made our freedom possible Then began a journey to fulfill that vision It's been uphill, all the way But we carried on And progressed Today, we can look back at the journey we've completed with pride And at the one ahead with hope

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Akali-BJP Government in Punjab: A Balance-Sheet

SATYAPAL DANG

Chief Minister Badal and other Akali leaders claim that during the short period of less than eight months of the Akali-BJP rule in Punjab, they have fulfilled more than eighty per cent of the promises they had made There are others who claim that they have not fulfilled any of their promises nor have they done any good for the State or its people It is time to make an objective assessment

Establishment of a "science city" in Jalandhar was not in their agenda as it did not figure in either of the manifestos of the two parties Whether this idea came from Badal or from Prime Minister Gujral, the decision to this effect is really very much welcome If it materialises, it can help to create a scientific temper among the youth in Punjab And that will do a lot of good The Prime Minister and the Chief Minister both need to be thanked for this step that they have taken

Another welcome decision of the Badal Government is to set up the Punjab Human Rights Commission It may be mentioned that the CPI group in the previous Vidhan Sabha had moved a resolution proposing such a Commission A wrong statement was made in the Punjab Assembly by a Minister of the then Congress Government that no State in India had set up such a Commission to justify its refusal to set up one in Punjab Actually West Bengal, Himachal and one or two more States did already have functioning State level Commissions The entire Opposition had supported the CPI resolution We are happy that a Human Rights Commission has now been set up

Writing off of the huge loan which Punjab had to pay to the Centre on account of the large expenditure incurred on fighting terrorism (if it has been really written off) is indeed a big gain for Punjab Badal can surely claim credit for this But so can other political parties The main credit, however, has to go to Prime Minister Gujral

The Akali-BJP Government decided against making any discretionary quota allotments of plots/houses The decision, however, is not final and was taken because the High Court had questioned the allotments by the former Chief Minister, Harcharan Singh Brar This included allotments to Ministers and legislators The matter is still pending in the High Court and further allotments were stayed by it implicity if not explicitly

The author, the most widely respected Communist veteran in Punjab, played a pivotal role in spearheading the struggle against Khalistani terrorism-cum-secessionism

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A big credit is claimed by the Badal Government for fulfilling the promise to supply power free for irrigation/agriculture I cannot congratulate him for it It was an irresponsible populist promise and its fulfilment will do more harm than good What justification can there be for letting big landlords like Badal and Brar have free power worth Rs 75,000 per month or so in each such case? Electricity at cheap subsidised rates for peasants owning upto seven-and-a-half acres would have been a correct measure Free supply to even them would be wrong because that would lead to great misuse of the facility The government seems determined to go back on its commitment not to increase the rates of other consumers and to make good the loss of the PSEB from the State Budget However, Badal has recently issued a warning that he would withdraw the facility if its misuse was not stopped One cannot be sure whether he will make a serious review of the matter

Abolition of land revenue is another promise fulfilled The government was getting less under this head than what it was spending on realising the same From that viewpoint, it is welcome However, any adverse effect of this step on maintenance of vital land records needs to be studied because that can harm the poor peasants, tenants, etc

The credit for higher procurement price for wheat goes to the United Front Government of India and not to Badal The UF Government also needs to be congratulated for resisting the Akali inspired agitation to fix this price at a level which would have resulted in starvation for the urban as well as rural poor Except for the landlords, the patriotic peasantry of Punjab supported the stand of the UF Government and defied the call not to take their wheat to the market for sale The Akalis can certainly share credit with other parties and the UF Government for resolving the controversy with regard to the fine and superfine qualities of paddy in favour of Punjab's stand But it cannot claim exclusive credit Purchase of two lakh tons of wheat by the Punjab Government is a right move

The scheme for focal points in rural areas is an old pet idea of Badal and he has revived it The general view is that it will not result in any benefit

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THE Akalis had promised to give a *shagan* of Rs 5100 on the marriage of every girl belonging to the Scheduled Castes On coming to power, they fixed an income limit for the families for eligibility of the *shagan* The scheme as modified is being implemented with much fanfare though allegations of corruption, etc are there Denial of this gift to poor girls not belonging to the Scheduled Caste (and Christian) category has evoked some criticism The scheme has also invited the comment that this is the Akali way of trying to increase their votes amongst the Scheduled Caste agricultural labourers who consider the Akali party as a party of landlords and rich peasants, a party which has always opposed radical land reforms

Old age pension to all women above 60 and to all men above 65 was promised Badal even said at many places during his election campaign that even he would be entitled to get one On coming to power, action on all pending applications was stopped It was announced that teams would go from house to house with doctors to give age-certificates and new applications would be taken from all those eligible by March 31, 1997 Nothing happened The scheme was then given up Instead the previous scheme was maintained except for increasing the income limit of the applicants for eligibility Teams have now gone in some constituencies to get applications There are widespread reports that applications of many of those eligible persons who are not supporters of one or the other ruling party are being turned down on one false plea or another There are also reports that oral quotas beyond which applications must not be taken have been given to officers

The Akali and BJP activists are telling the people that their government has made travel in government buses free for women above 60 Actually this facility was notified in December 1996 by the then government of Rajinder Kaur Bhattal The Akali-BJP Government has started implementing it recently

The move to set up a medical university in Punjab was initiated by the Congress Government It will be a good thing if the present government implements it The move to set up an Institute of Medical Research at Jalandhar was Beant Singh's idea and it had some scandalous aspects These were exposed by the CPI in the State Assembly It remains to be seen how the Badal Government implements it

To get votes from the working class, Badal visited some of the closed cooperative mills (for example, at Malout, Budhlada and Mansa) and told the workers of these mills that if they voted for his party, their vote would ensure the reopening of the mills "within a week" Soon after the Akali-BJP Government was formed, Badal told the workers of the Malout Mill "There is no question of reopening the mill" The same attitude is being conveyed in relation to the other closed mills The demand of the working class to revise the minimum wages has been turned down

The government has gone back on the promise to abolish octroi Octroi no doubt is a bad tax but it cannot be abolished unless alternative resources are found for the urban local bodies In Punjab, owners of houses on small plots were exempted from house tax The eligibility conditions needed to be amended The Akali-BJP Government has, however, ablished house tax on all residential houses benefitting also the owners of big houses and bunglows at the cost of the income of Municipal Corporations and Municipal Councils

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THE Akali and BJP leaders repeatedly assured the people during the elections that they would ensure continuation of peace in Punjab and would not let terrorism raise its head again The Akali-BJP Government's record so far in this connection is far from being creditworthy

They have gone back on their promise to set up a judicial commission to fix responsibility for the rise of terrorism in Punjab because they know that the Akalis would be found to be as much to blame as the Congress

When one after another some terrorist incidents took place in Punjab, Badal, his Ministers, the Akali and BJP leaders as well as the DGP dished out the false theory that the ISI had organised these directly and no terrorist organisation of Punjab was involved They admitted the involvement of these organisations only when they could not help, that is, when some culprits responsible for the Lehra Khana train incident were caught by the people and handed over to the police Even after this, the present government cannot be relied upon to prevent the re-emergence of terrorism for more than one reason

Some of the CRPF officers who were taken on deputation by the Punjab Government and who did excellent work in fighting terrorism were sent back even without prior consultations with the Government of India because some Ministers and/or their kith and kin wanted some officers of the Punjab Police to be promoted Transfers in the Police Department are being made by the Chief Minister under the pressure of relatives and friends without any regard for merits and justice It was after much pressure and agitation in the Assembly that Badal called an all-parties meeting to have a consensus on this vital issue It has proved a mere formality Badal is not able to control Tohra when he justifies the honouring of even Bhindranwala and the assassins of General Vaidya and Indira Gandhi, when he calls every terrorist killer a *shaheed* even if he got killed by the police after killing many innocent men, women and children and after raping many girls, etc and thus encourages terrorism The BJP leaders once upon a time blamed both the Congress and the Akalis as being responsible for terrorism Now they give the Akalis a clean chit knowing fully well that as in the Barnala Government after 1985 so in the Badal Government now, there are Ministers who were fully with the terrorists and who can help terrorism to re-emerge misusing their position Without the united and powerful voice and vigilance of the people, re-emergence of terrorism cannot be prevented Once again the Akali leaders have started making false propaganda about "discrimination against Sikhs" And this can only bring grist to the mill of the terrorists Of course, the possibility of the Congress once again trying to use the extremist elements against the Badal Government cannot be ruled out either

Victims of terrorism are not getting the sympathy they deserve, from the present government Subsistence allowance for widows of victims of terrorism was increased from Rs 1500 to Rs 2500 by Rajinder Kaur Bhattal The decision stands However, widows don't get it for months. Likewise studying children of the victims don't get stipends for months In the on-the-whole good relief package, there are some anomalies The request for removing these or at least calling an all parties meeting to discuss these has not evoked any positive response

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THE deterioration in the law and order situation is now being admitted Particularly alarming has been the increase in crime against women and also crimes by a section of the police in this context The case of +2 student Kiranjit Kaur of Mahil Kalan in Sangrur district who was raped by a gang and then killed and the virtual refusal on the part of the police and the government to do anything about it till forced to act by a massive agitation has exposed the nexus between criminals and a section of the politicians, in this case the Akalis It has disproved Badal's contention that in Punjab there is no nexus between criminals and politicians

The trump card of Badal to get votes was his promise to punish the corrupt bureaucrats, corrupt Congress Ministers and to give a clean administration This promise continues to be made even now but the practice has been just the opposite

Even well-known corrupt bureaucrats have not been touched A highly corrupt bureaucrat was appointed the Principal Secretary of the Chief Minister A CBI enquiry against him was sought to be thwarted by issuing illegal orders for non-cooperating with the CBI and not making available to them the relevant records A retreat was made under the pressure of adverse public opinion The Principal Secretary was shifted to some other department as a part of this retreat

A former CPI MLA and this writer have sent more than 15 serious allegations against the former Congress Ministers to Chief Minister Badal They have been sent to the departments concerned "for necessary action" which is the usual method to pigeon-hole them A Congress Minister who collected about Rs 10 crores from Sarpanches who were given cheques out of the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana funds in blatant violation of all rules and regulations has not been touched either An enquiry was initiated by the Vigilance Department of the Government of Punjab during Congress rule under the pressure of the Government of India Some officials and some Sarpanches were suspended More were suspended after Badal became the Chief Minister The chief culprit, that is, the Minister-in-charge, remained untouched when the Congress ruled the State and remains so even under the Akali-BJP Government He is related to a former Chief Minister who in turn is related to the present Chief Minister The former Minister is reported to have threatened to involve a son of the former Chief Minister if he is touched The son was a member of the extra-constitutional authority which then ruled Punjab by proxy

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THE Lok Pal has been revived However, it has not been given teeth For instance, the fee of Rs 1000 has not been abolished In the Lok Pal Act, enacted when Beant Singh was the Chief Minister, the provision was that all proceedings would be in camera except when it was ordered otherwise by the Lok Pal for reasons to be recorded in writing Now the "in camera" provision has been made absolute and punishment for leaking proceedings has been made harsher And all this notwithstanding the tall talk of transparent government The only improvement is that now complaints against MLAs too can be filed directly No rules have been framed under the Act as yet

Corruption has increased instead of decreasing All the activists of the AITUC union of the PEPSU Roadways Corporation have been punished by way of unjustified and punitive transfers because the leadership of the union had successfully prevented appointments of a large number of drivers many of whom were not even qualified to be appointed but whose appointments had been desired by those who matter If something worse has not happened, it is because of the firm stand taken by a concerned IAS officer and due to the strength of the union

The Akali Government claims to be a government of farmers It promised deterrent punishment to those who supply fake pesticides, etc to them Raids were organised Many samples have failed No one, however, has been punished And the campaign seems to be over Corruption alone can explain this

Route-permits for buses are being given to favourite ones Private transporters never had it so good as now

Many more examples could be given in support of our contention that all talk of removing corruption and punishing the corrupt was and is meant only to deceive the gullible There are many instances of corruption cases at different levels, which were previously sought to be hushed up by the Congress Government and which are being hushed up now by the Akali-BJP Government Ordering registration of a case against an officer or a public man here and there does not change the basic reality that the present government is no less corrupt than the Congress Government Even successive Congress Governments of the past could claim ordering action against some corrupt bureaucrats here and there

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EFFECTIVE steps were promised in connection with removal of the grievances machinery Precissely the opposite has happened

Sangat Darshan Darbars have proved to be a gimmick Grievances committees were earlier disbanded The new ones by and large have not been formed as yet or have not yet become functional Their composition has been weakened to suit the government In Amritsar, for instance, the CPI and CPI-M have not been given any representation

The Chief Minister's Secretariat at least acknowledges the receipt of DO letters to Badal Balramji Dass Tandon and Kanwaljit Singh too reply Our experience with the other Ministers including Madan Mohan Mittla has been quite sad No reply is ever received howsoever urgent the grievance may be

Badal promised a small Ministry Actually, we have a jambo-size one Top bureaucrats and some Ministers have more than one and in some cases many air-conditioned cars There is a move to give all MLAs very costly cars instead of the Gypsies they were given only recently and which are in quite good condition

Last but not the least here are some specimen of the functioning of some departments

a) *Education* Almost exclusive emphasis is on setting up Adarsh (model) schools with English as medium of instruction for the rural elites—another pet scheme of Badal The Minister for School Education has announced such vital "reforms" as introduction of teaching of English from the first primary class and five-day week in all schools without any prior consultation with educationists Repeated announcements have been made that all vacant posts in schools would be filled "soon" Mostly they remain unimplemented

b) *Local Government* The Constitution was violated by the previous Congress Governments by not holding fresh elections to the three Municipal Corporations in the State to be able to delimit wards afresh to suit the Congress Many new wards were not even contiguous In some wards the number of voters was three times the number of voters of another ward of the same corporation The Akali-BJP Government too decided to violate the Constitution by delaying beyond their term of five years fresh elections to Municipal Councils and Municipal Panchayats to redemarcate the wards to suit the interests of the two ruling parties The government has stuck to its unconstitutional decision despite the repeated and strong protestations of the Punjab Election Commission Two Municipal Corporations have BJP Mayors while one has an Akali Mayor All the three continue to violate the

(Continued on page 30)

The Hapless Indian Girl Child

SARASWATI HAIDER

It was reported in the press recently that female infanticide, which unfortunately is still practised in India (now through modern methods, that is, by ameniocentisis by which the sex of the child can be predicted before birth and the female foetus aborted declared unlawful yet surreptitiously still resorted to), and the bias against the girl child could be things of the past if the programme for the girl child to be launched by the Prime Minister, I K Gujral, with an outlay of Rs 1500 crores, on October 2, is effectively implemented

When we look at the programme envisaged, and the odds that are ranged against it, it will be quite apparent that though special programmes aimed at ending the discrimination against the girl child are indeed needed and are most welcome, to expect that a single scheme of the Prime Minister on its own will make the prejudices against the girl child a thing of the past is again very much in keeping with our planners' proclivities, trying to live in a fool's paradise A significant catch-phrase of the news item is that the bias against the girl child will become a thing of the past if the scheme *is effectively implemented* which, looking at the past record of all the welfare and poverty alleviation programmes, seems to be a hope in hell, because of the scams by middlemen, with the result, as Rajiv Gandhi rather belatedly discovered, only 15 paise in a rupee reach the beneficiary

The Prime Minister's scheme for the girl child projected as one of the most ambitious programmes of the United Front Government has been, it has been reported, worked out by a team of senior officials from the PMO and the Ministers concerned and that official sources have emphasised that Gujral will supervise the preparations going on at various levels in the government Senior officials from the Ministries concerned met in late August to give the finishing touches to the programme

In spite of the *ad nauseum* touting of the need for decentralisaiton by those in the corridors of power here we have again a prime example of the top-to-bottom, paternalistic approach with the Ministers and high level government officials drawing up the plan with no participation of the people whom the programme will affect and who will ultimately implement the programme—the parents of the girl child—as the latter can surely not implement the programme herself—and the local panchayats, to whom, it has been proposed, the programme should be handed over for implementation

It must be realised by the authorities that decentralisation does not mean the planning of the programme at the top level and then merely handing over the funds allocated, and the programme, for implementation, to the local bodies Decentralisation must most definitely involve in the planning process also the people to be affected by it, here the girl child, but as she is a minor, her parents, and the local bodies, who will oversee the programme's proper implementation A non-inclusion of these personnel in the planning of the programme means their alienation from the programme from the very beginning and once again pushes them into the passive 'dependency syndrome' Unless the people whom the programmes affect are involved right from the beginning, that is, the planning stage, of the programme, they will never see the programme as their own and hence its desired, effective implementation required for its success will be jeopardised

Though decentralisation has become like a bumble bee buzzing buzzword, the government does not seem to have given very much thought to the *modus operandi* that needs to be adopted to make it viable The powers that be always seem to think in extremes —complete centralisation or complete decentralisation without realising that decentralisation should actually involve an active participation of both—a centralised power and the beneficiaries It is a two-way process, not a complete handing over of all planning and implementation to the beneficiaries, or the community, or the keeping of all planning and implementation tightly in the fist of an authoritarian central power body Even if the government very rightly decides to decentralise it must understand that to keep in focus an overall view of development and priorities, a non-authoritarianly functioning and helpfully guiding central authority is a necessity so that development does not become parochial and lose its national overall perspective Decentralisation actually should involve an equalitarian give-and-take between a central power and the local community and beneficiaries Plans should travel from the bottom to the top and then from the top to the bottom, and if so required, again, from the bottom to the top, and so on, initiating a dialogical process The implementation of the programmes while wholly in the hands of the beneficiaries and their supervisory community organs also needs professional and cooperative, non-dictatorial, guidance, and know-how, from a central body that has the requisite knowledge and expertise

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To come back to the Prime Minister's scheme for the girl child, the news report proclaims that the available details suggest that at the time a girl child is born the government will pay an amount to the family to look after her nutrition and other needs Another amount will be invested in a long term deposit to meet her future requirements

The scheme, which will be entirely funded by the Centre, aims at paying an annual incentive to every girl who joins a primary school at the age of five This amount will be doubled by the time the child moves on to the sixth standard Those who successfully complete schooling and do not get married before eighteen will be entitled to a lump-sum to pursue higher studies or to start a venture of self-employment So far so good But in all this planning one important fact has not been given due consideration that the money meant for the girl child will actually be received by her parents and what is the guarantee that the funds will be spent on the minor girl child who cannot manage her own affairs? This aspect is a very significant one that has to be given due, adequate, attention, because the prejudices against the girl child have centuries old deep social and cultural roots which cannot disappear in a jiffy

The girl child is seen as a burden firstly because her honour has to be vigilantly guarded for virginity is an important requirement for her marriage Because of the stress on virginity girls are married off at a very early age before they start menstruating among the lower classes at least Can the Prime Minister's scheme on its own suddenly make this social attitude disappear? Definitely not What needs to be implemented more vigorously, together with the envisaged scheme for the girl child of the Prime Minister, is the law against child marriage which is being overridden with impunity quite openly

Another reason why a girl child is considered a burden among the lower and lower middle classes who form about 70 per cent of India's total population is the socially and culturally strong belief that the ultimate destiny of the girl child is marriage and the role of a good wife and mother of sons, hence no serious thought is given to her education or to equip her to pursue an independent career of her own Women of the more orthodox lower and the lower middle classes are first and foremost to be good wives and mothers and work outside the home only if there is extreme financial need In the lower castes, which generally also belong to the lower classes, women usually work outside the home also However, because of the desire to emulate the upper castes, whose women are generally not supposed to work outside the home, and the process of Sanskritisation (as the eminent social anthropologist M N Srinivas calls it), the lower caste males also withdraw their women from doing work outside the home once the man of the house can earn enough to single-handedly feed his family It also goes against the masculinity of the male head of the household to make his wife work unless the circumstances are dire This negative attitude against women working for a living has to be confronted and transformed if the Prime Minister's scheme is to be meaningfully successful

A third, and perhaps the primary, reason for the girl child being seen as a burden by her parents, is the ever growing and escalating practice and demand of *dahej*—acquisition of which by the grooms and their parents is sky-rocketing in all classes Here again the law against the taking and giving of *dahej* has not been actively and effectively enforced and ostentatious weddings involving exorbitant, wasteful, conspicuous expenditure and *dahej* taking and giving, are an every day occurrence with the law turning a Nelson's eye to them Again if the scheme envisaged by the Prime Minister for the girl child is to become effective it has to be necessarily accompanied by a strict and rigorous enforcement of the law against the taking and giving of *dahej* now quite a common practice among the lower classes also

As said before, while the scheme envisioned by the Prime Minister is to be commended, it has to be accompanied by a committed, sincere effort to gouge out traditional social and cultural attitudes that lead to discrimination against the girl child and her mired and maimed existence If a transformation of the negative social and cultural attitudes towards the girl child is not hastened and determinedly pursued at the social and cultural levels the Prime Minister's most welcome scheme for the girl child will end up as an illusory enticing mirage on which a lot of money would have been staked achieving no 'real' success ■

TRIBUTE

Mohan Upreti

P.C JOSHI

This is a belated tribute to the eminent folk musician as well as cultural organiser and leader, Mohan Upreti, who died on June 6, 1997, by the author, a distinguished economist who also hails from the UP hills and has had close relations with the deceased The author wrote this tribute for a smarika *brought out by the Parvatiya Kala Kendra on the occasion of a cultural show in Mohan's memory (New Delhi, September 20-21, 1997) He has now sent it for publication in* Mainstream *for the benefit of our readers*

—Editor

"Sach hai ghan tam me kho jate
shrot sunhale din ke
par prachi se jharne wali
asha ka to ant nahi"

[True, in deep darkness is lost the day with its golden streams But the rays of hope springing from the East have no ending!

—English rendering of the Hindi poem by the author]

—Chandra Kunwar Bartwal

More than four months have elapsed since Mohan breathed his last on the evening of sixth June His passing away so suddenly and unexpectedly was an irreparable loss—to his beloved wife, to his frail and ailing old mother, to his large and loving family, to his colleagues, co-workers and friends, and to the world of art and culture For the people of Uttarakhand his passing away has created a void which seems unbridgeable To them he had come to symbolise their quest for identity through a cultural renewal The National School of Drama has lost a valued colleague and teacher of great integrity and ability and the theatre world, a creative music composer We are all still benumbed by our own sorrow and trying hard to come to terms with our loss

There is Ruby, my wife, who had known him as a dance partner in the very first performance of the now well-renowned *Beru Pako Barah Masha,* on the national stage in honour of the visiting Chinese dignitaries during the early fifties in Delhi Ruby had composed the dance and Mohan the music for this major cultural item for the momentous occasion and it had elicited warm and prolonged applause from the audience including the visiting dignitaries and, more importantly, from Jawaharlal Nehru himself who came to the stage to personally compliment Mohan and Ruby The item was such a grand success that a life-size picture of Mohan and Ruby appeared on the cover page of *Dharm Yug* That issue of the Hindi magazine was to be found in several *Pahadi* homes

Remembering him are also his childhood friends We had seen him grow from our favourite playmate into an artist of national stature But for us he was always the same Mohan, an intimate and understanding friend, for almost six decades We were in the habit of ringing up each other every now and then and we shared with each other new ideas, new experiences, new projects and also our innermost thoughts and "secrets" We worked together as colleagues in the student movement in the late forties and early fifties and a close affinity had developed between us as both of us had turned to radical thoughts and politics We had much to share in terms of common ideals and common worldview and also in terms of the tension between borrowed concepts and Indian realities We were also brought much nearer to each other as both of us had rebelled against conventions in our personal lives and had to confront sometimes silent and sometimes eloquent disapproval, and also at times rejection, by the environment to which we belonged Most important at that point in own lives we were both tortured souls—tortured by the conflict between our political commitment and our artistic and scientific commitment, between our natural inclination and our loyalty to ideology and the party which in that period of sectarian politics dissallowed choice of vocation and freedom of self-expression It was through great inner struggle that we were able to seek reconciliation between the two and if we were not shattered by this conflict, it is primarily because we stood by each other and gave strength and support to each other

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OUR friendship matured into fruitful collaboration as adults later in several national assignments I was privileged to have Mohan as a colleague when I headed the Software Planning Committee for Doordarshan appointed by the Government of India during the early eighties Our Report gained much from his rich cultural experiences and insights and also his political maturity Later we were together in a delegation of scientists, creative writers and artists to the Soviet Union under the auspices of the Indo-Soviet Cultural Festival Mohan's paper on Indian Folk Art and Culture was very much appreciated in Moscow But what endeared him to his colleagues and also to everyone with whom he interacted was his capacity to respect others as much as he respected himself and to easily build bridges of communication and understanding with others He was totally free from ideological intolerance in an era when ideology was put in high pedestal and partisanship bordering on fanaticism was the order of the day Mohan was truly and wholly an artist and he was above ideology in the narrow sense of the term, though not free from ideology as a worldview and an orientating principle for thought and praxis In the earlier years of "high ideological commitment" I remember several occasions when his intervention helped to soften frayed tempers and to ease tensions through his rich sense of humour and capacity for laughter His laughter was so infectious and disarming! I remember one occasion when our discussion on an issue had produced great heat and tension And then Mohan said "Would you kindly listen to this new tune that I have composed!" When some ideologues protested, Mohan remarked "You know what Bakunin had said in his last years 'All the ideologies of the world will perish Only Beethoven's Ninth Symphony will last! So please listen to me!'" And, indeed, everyone laughed and listened to his song That resilence Mohan retained all his life

I had taken Mohan with me on an invitation to a Parliamentary Sub-Committee which was discussing the issue of how Television was allowing without any check sex, pronography and violence and causing untold harm to the children The concern of the Committee members was fully justified But they were not willing to distinguish between artistically permissible depiction of sex and its pronographic portrayal We were trying to argue with the Committee members that not all representations of sex, man-woman relations, and nudity could be treated as pronography and that the critics should not surrender to prudery and excessive puritanism This will be rejected by our youth today who are in revolt against the norms of an over-repressed, conservative society The chairperson shot back in disagreement

> Do you regard the film song, '*Choli Ke Peeche Kya Hai*", and the visuals accompanying it as proper and moral? Isn't that grossly vulgar?

I didn't know how to respond to that question, though the vulgarity of this song and the visuals was unquestionable At this point Mohan seized the initiative He said

> Madam, that is gross vulgarisation of a folk song which has been popular for centuries Now listen to me, please

And then in his melodious and enchanting voice he sang the folk song

"Piya kaise jhulaon ras ke bijana
Patli kalai pei baikat na
Bindiya ke bhar mora matha dukhe
Hansuli ke bhar uthe sar na
Lahanga ke bhar meri kamar dukhe
Choliya ke bhar dukhle jobna "
(How can I be waving the fan, my love
My wrist is not strong but slender
My forehead is aching because of my *Bindiya*
My head is heavy because of my *Hansuli*
My waiste is aching because of my *Lahanga*
My youth is aching because of my *Choliya*)

The impact of this wonderful folk song and its poetry was at once electrifying and chastening The Sub-Committee members were completely disarmed and were asking Mohan to sing one or two more songs Where our arguments had failed, Mohan's music had succeeded After the song was over, there was warm applause No further questions were asked The members remarked

> Why can't Doordarshan produce programmes on the basis of such songs and such poetry which forms a part of our tradition and are so full of the joy of life and are not at all vulgar?

Mohan had deep faith that where ideology failed, art succeeded, and where ideology in its perverse form divided, art in its best form united That was the faith which sustained him in pioneering Parvatiya Kala Kendra as the institution dedicated to the preservation and promotion of the folk cultural heritage of Uttarakhand in a form suited to the changing conditions of life and to the requirements of the modern stage This was a cultural project which was profoundly ideological in the deeper sense and totally free from and above ideology in the narrow sense of the term Insofar as the cultural project elevated the oppressed people and their culture from the periphery to the centre, it had the potential of preparing their minds and souls for social liberation and empowerment And from this point of view, it performed an ideological function Insofar as the cultural project enabled the enlightened elements from the elite to adopt and own the folk cultural heritage and to refine and refashion it for the modern times, it helped in the declassing of the elite and in bridging the great cultural divide between what Gandhi called "the classes and the masses" and what Antonio Gramsci had called "the national and the popular" This was Mohan's grand cultural vision and perspective

Mohan had created first the Lok Kalakar Sangh at Almora and later, after he was forced by an order of the UP Government to leave Almora and to shift to Delhi, he had renamed it as the Parvatiya Kala Kendra These institutions were created for the objective of promoting a cultural renewal among the people of Uttarakhand through a process of elite returning to the roots and thereby creatively absorbing, assimilating and developing the folk cultural heritage

Mohan believed that the enlightened artists from the elite could serve as catalysts of this cultural renewal In his own lifetime Mohan had been able to create an institution, to launch certain artistic productions as pilot experiments, to create a cultural troupe from amateurs who had the potential of growing up into full-fledged folk professionals and to indicate the vast cultural potential of the folk cultural heritage He was also contemplating the next step, that of interpreting his cultural experiments in broader and deeper theoretical and philosophical terms so as to transform and elevate the Parvatiya Kala Kendra from a centre of performing folk arts into a School of Folk Arts and Cultures of India with its base in Uttarakhand He saw in the political resurgence of Uttarakhand a favourable setting for giving a pratical shape to this grand vision But before he could take the next step, he was no more Who will now take this step?

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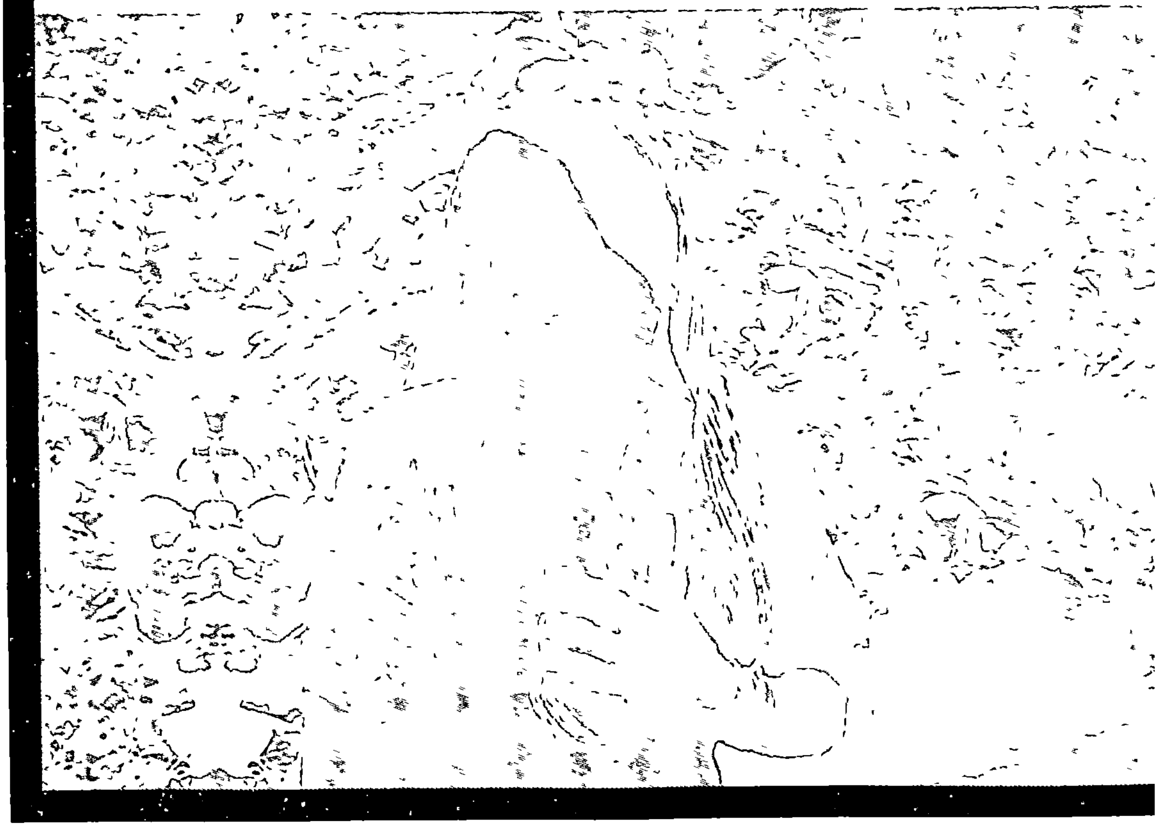
AND this brings me to the Parvativa Kala Kendra, to Mohan's colleagues and co-workers of this institution It was founded by him and nurtured as only a parent nurtures his only child, with wholehearted love and affection, .single-minded dedication and attention and with great concern and anxiety as to how the child (institution) would grow and evolve The members of the Parvatiya Kala Kendra family have not yet fully recovered from the fathomless sorrow and grief and the leadership void caused by Mohan's passing away He was the centre around which the whole institution and its members had rallied, they were accustomed to look up to him for inspiration, guidance and direction at every point, on every issue and on every matter of policy or the details of its implementation Even the personal problem of each member of the troupe were resolved through his counsel and imaginative handling

All of them, old and young, men and women, boys and girls, from Garhwal and Kumaon, who had shared his concerns, had also worked hard to give a pratical shape to his dream For them it had been a joy to work with him and under his guidance which no one ever questioned They had worked from year to year, from one assignment to another, from one challenge to another and in the pursuit of their project, had gone from one country to another, giving performances relating to the folk songs and dances of Uttarakhand and other regions of India They had thus introduced the Delhi intelligentsia to the great folk art themes and tunes, dances, dramatic forms and folk ballads like *Rajula Malushai, Ajua Bafaul, Ramu, Jitu Bagdwal, Rasik Ramol, Haru Heet, Ram Leela, Panday Jagar*, etc They had also experimented with productions on secular and national themes like *Indra Sabha* and *Ameer Khusro*

Through a succession of productions presented on the national stage, the Parvativa Kala Kendra had in the hard way won recognition from top experts as well as lay intelligentsia as the premier cultural institution working for India's cultural renewal though revitalisation of the folk heritage The Kendra was evolving a "cultural model" which other regions could emulate With the passing away of their guiding spirit, the Parvatiya Kala Kendra members have been asking themselves What next? Where do we go from here? Slowly and silently life asserts itself and the dominant thought in the mind of each one of them is We must not let our mentor, our master, down!

That is as it should be I lend my moral support to those who have pledged that Mohan's dream and his project will not be allowed to perish with him I also believe that an institution created by an individual is like his child who is not just his extension but has a life, a will, a momentum, a destiny and a future of its own The same is and will be true of the Parvatiya Kala Kendra It is already showing a will of its own, charting out its own growth path on the basis of the initial push provided by its founder and mentor I bless this independent initiative There is an old Chinese saying that a thousand miles long journey begins with a single step We are already seeing the beginning of the new journey ■

IN 1993 A MAS SHOOK THE WHOL AND OVER S PEOPLE



VE EARTHQUAKE
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KERALA

Latur, Maharashtra A faraway land for Kerala Too far for any Malayalam newspaper to reach
Yet
Kerala wept when Latur's dreams crumbled in a quake in 1993
And compassion overflowed as donations through Malayala Manorama Some readers sent cheques of infinite generosity, some handed over hard-earned half-rupee coins
Teardrops of seven million readers became Rs 2 5 crore Something no other Indian newspaper could match Ever
Now
Look at the miracle of humanity 163 houses, roads, hospital, school, temple, public library, panchayat office, gymnasium, open-air theatre Banegaon in Latur has risen from the rubble
The villagers call it Malayala Manorama Banegaon With love
Yes
Malayala Manorama goes beyond journalism With dedication and the human touch
A legend for 109 years Forever

Malayala Manorama
KERALA AT ITS BEST
Malayala Manorama is India's largest read newspaper with over 77* lakh readers everyday

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CPC CONGRESS OUTCOME

Zhao Ziyang asserts in Jiang's China

RAVINDRA SHARMA

In September, two political events of international significance crafted the contemporary politics of East Asia one, the Fifteenth Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), and two, the Gujral-Clinton summit in America Analytically, both events proved pivotal for the US While China's top leader Jiang Zemin at the Fifteenth Congress pledged to continue to follow the reforms initiated by Deng Xiaoping with greater privatisation, Gujral and his team in America by and large succumbed to the pressure of the Clinton Administration Before these lines come out in print, the Clinton-Jiang summit may be concluded in America

Tong Yi, a student activist of China's democracy movement, through the columns of *The New York Times,* has already asked Clinton to pressurise Jiang to release Wu Jingsheng and other student leaders detained after the June 4, 1989 massacre

One feels that the prognosis of the Fifteenth Congress requires a proper perspective alongwith mature understanding of China's politics The Fifteenth Congress was supposed to be held sometime in November It was preponed because Jiang probably wanted to hoist the Red Flag on October 1 (National Day) with his new team and a sense of confidence This Congress primordially concentrated on two points one, greater privatisation, and two, corruption The reduction of the PLA was also announced at the Congress, but this has been on the agenda of the CPC way back since 1992 The issue of the June 4 massacre also haunted the Congress Politically, the incumbents of post-Deng China indeed seem to be perturbed by the ghost of the Tiananmen episode

Many must have forgotten that exactly 21 years ago Mao had passed away (September 9, 1976), Hua Guofeng was elevated to the throne (October 1, 1976) and the Gang of Four was purged (October 7, 1976) Keeping in mind the post-Mao succession problem, an analogy may be drawn here When Hua came to power, Deng was out of power, asserting to reverse Mao's verdict of the April 5, 1976 movement, with the assendency of Jiang, Zhao Ziyang has begun to assert to reverse Deng's assessment of the June 4 massacre Jiang's open letter, dated September 12, to the delegates of the Congress may be a reliable document for China watchers

The author is a faculty member at the Chinese and Japanese Studies, University of Delhi, he is also a leading member of the CPI-ML (Liberation)

> It is baseless to determine the nature of the movement as a "counter-revolutionary rebellion"

Everyone knows that at that time most of the students wanted punishment of the corrupt and to promote political reform and not to overthrow the Communist Party As Zhao was against the use of military force, he asserted arguing "the problem of June 4 will be resolved sooner or later", not surprisingly, a textile worker Wang Hongsui from the eastern Andui province also protested demanding the rehabilitation of Zhao Ziyang Wang's letter may be an eye-opener for the orthodox Communists

> Countless facts have proved that one-party system does harm to society

The moot point to be noted is that just as Deng asserted after Mao's demise, so has Zhao after Deng's departure Hua throughout his tenure was afraid of Deng, so seems to be Jiang of Zhao A word was not uttered by him about the June 4 tragedy at the Congress

Jiang was the third heir chosen by Deng The previous two hand-picked successors were Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang Both were purged by him because of the student unrest This time Zhao's appeal to reassess the June 4 issue shows the gravity of the situation on the one hand and the Jiang versus Zhao rupture on the other Analytically, post-Deng politics is not as smoothly and peacefully settled as was visualised by the US

Despite Zhao and his disciple Wang Hongsui's hubble-bubble outside the Great Hall, the official rulers refused, as was expected, to toe the idea of Western democracy Prior to the Congress, many observers, particularly Western, had felt that this Congress may initiate a dialogue on political reforms giving some scope for Western democracy to operate in China Jiang's speech at the Congress may have disappointed them, as Jiang categorically said

> Only the Communist Party of China can lead the Chinese people in achieving victories and improving the people's well-being

The proclamation of the transfer of 30,000 ailing state-owned enterprises (SoEs) into private hands by Jiang at the Congress is the continuation of the policy of economic reforms that was initiated by Deng at the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee held in December 1978 The CPC's earlier Congresses—particularly the Twelfth, Thirteenth and Fourteenth respectively—following Deng's wisdom took China towards limited privatisation suggesting that in the phase of the "primary stage of socialism, the multistructured Chinese economy will continue for a long time" In this Congress, Jiang's justification for greater privatisation attaches importance to practical wisdom, not the Marxian theory, as Jiang was convinced

> We would get nowhere if we study Marxism statically in isolation and separate it from its vigorous development in actual life

The ruling elite of post-Deng China probably follows the present worldwide wave of "Rightward shift", as Jiang clearly pointed out at the Congress

> We should maintain vigilance against "Rightist tendencies", but primarily against "the Left""

With the advent of economic reforms, corruption became a chronic malady in China Throughout Deng's era, corruption was vociferously discussed in and outside China The rulers of post-Deng China publicly accepted the growing influence of money and hedonism on the Chinese society The former Mayor of Beijing Chen Xitong's trial for criminal prosecution during the Congress portrays a bleak picture of Deng's socialism At the Fifteenth Congress Jiang's call to "fight against corruption" may not be a real remedy of the ongoing crisis, but it is true that corruption is an issue that is very "vital to the very existence of the Party and the State" A cardinal question is where lies the genesis of corruption in socialist China? A humorous answer to the question is corruption is a worldwide phenomenon, as once Mrs Gandhi pointed out while dealing with the question of corruption in the Indian context From the point of view of social sciences, development and corruption go together If Jiang's China continues to follow Deng's model of development, corruption is not only bound to occur but will certainly continue to eat into the "vitals" of the Chinese society

Another major announcement of the Congress was to reduce 50,000 men from the PLA This slash is part and parcel of China's military modernisation plan which was initiated by Deng in the early 1980s with the argument that modern war strategy requires highly sophisticated weaponry, not the high number of troops Leading military Generals like Zhang Zhen and also Defence Minister Chi Haotian including old guard Liu Huaqing agreed upon the idea of reduction on the ground that a huge amount of money will be spent on China's military modernisation drive As Jiang himself occupies the post of Chairman of Military Commission, he would certainly see that China's military modernisation drive gets proper care and attention The only question left to be seen is how and where will these 50,000 PLA men be placed?

Deng passed away on February 19 this year A hidden power tussle between Jiang and Qiao Shi manifested, probably for the first time, at the annual session of the NPC held last March, when Qiao Shi, as the President of the NPC, created problems for the Jiang-backed candidates in winning the elections of NPC At the Fifteenth Congress, Jiang settled the score by getting rid of Qiao Shi who was number three in the party Jiang also requested Lin Huaqing to take rest Jiang's another potential rival Li Peng's second term as the Premier, comes to an end in March 1998 and he may be replaced by the Vice-Premier, Zhu Rongji, who is also considered to be close ally of Jiang With the exclusion of the potent rival Qiao Shi, the threat to Jiang's power may not come from the inner core of the CPC, but from the outside purged leader Zhao Ziyang's assertion as he seems to be determined to change the assessment of the June 4 tragedy

In a nutshell, in terms of power sharing the Fifteenth Congress has undoubtedly boosted the careers of Jiang and Zhu Rongji By not promoting Li Peng further and with the prosecution of Chen Xitong, the post-Deng ruling elite of China probably wanted to heal the hurt feelings of the student/intellectual community As the Li-Chen combine was the most outspoken supporter of the military crackdown, one can argue tentatively that post-Deng power politics mainly centred around the June 4 episode

Let us sum up the discussion The CPC was founded on July 1, 1921 by the martyr Li Dazhao with only five delegates Prior to the liberation, that is, from 1921 to 1949, a total of seven Congresses were organised debating how to lead the Chinese revolution In the post-revolutionary period, in the erstwhile Mao era, the Eighth (1956), Ninth (1969) and Tenth (1973) Congresses were conducted with the focus on how to solve the question of socialist construction In Hua's period, only the Eleventh

(1977) Party Congress was called proposing a patch-up between Mao's and Liu's ideological paradigms In Deng's era the Twelfth (1982), Thirteenth (1987) and Fourteenth (1992) Congresses met with the rejection of Mao's notion, ideology, policies of development upholding the concept of "socialism with Chinese characteristics" alongwith the theory of "primary stage of socialism" in China With the presence of 2048 delegates at the Fifteenth Congress held from September 12 to 18, Jiang willingly and enthusiastically followed Deng's "developmental theory" attacking the hardcore "Leftists" Jiang as a leader of the third generation and a true successor of Deng has to prove that he can match the potential of his predecessors, Mao and Deng Can he deal with the sole superpower of the post-Cold War era leading the nation of 1 2 billion into the twentyfirst century? One doubts ■

BOOK REVIEW

Useful Addition to Autobiographical Literature

MADAN GOPAL

Nice Guys Finish Second by B K Nehru, Viking, 1997, pp 663, Rs 495

The memoirs published in recent years include those by former civil servants, diplomats, men of the armed forces But this one by a member of the steelframe Indian Civil Service, who was the first and last Indian Commissioner General in Washington and got us World Bank loans for the Second and Third Five Year Plans, the Ambassador to the most important countries, that is, the USA and UK, and the Governor of the sensitive North-Eastern India, Jammu and Kashmir, and Gujarat, is a class by itself It is a first-hand account of the history of our times and full of interesting anecdotes, some like the "untold" stories

Reared in the family that gave India the Dynasty of three rulers, a grandson, on the paternal side, of Motilal Nehru's brother, and, on the maternal side, of the Punjab patriarch, Dewan Narendranath, the author B K Nehru, the cousin of Indira Gandhi, was born in 1909 in Anand Bhavan and brought up in Allahabad, in the hallowed precincts of Anand Bhavan as part of the extended family of Motilal Nehru known for the strongly nationalistic and completely secular atmosphere Even Narendranath, sometime President of the Hindu Mahasabha, and his daughter Rameshwari Nehru were known for their secular liberal values. The Indian Civil Service was in those days the most coveted service Jawaharlal Nehru, BK's *chacha*, was going to jail and was a hero to be worshipped by the nephew

The reviewer is a veteran print and electronic media expert He has written over 50 books in English, Hindi and Urdu, his book—Origin and Development of Hindi-Urdu Literature—*having been a pioneering venture in English*

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B K Nehru went to London with his maternal grandfather to seek admission into the London School of Economics, and enter the Civil Service With a second division B Sc. (with Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics), he was told by the Indian High Commission's educational experts that he could not get into the prestigious LSE But he did enter the LSE. That was the result of an accidental meeting with two British bigwigs whom BK had met in connection with the visit of a Lahore Muslim VIP's daughter, Sughra, then staying with the Dewan Saheb in the hotel They asked BK where he was going to study, whether Oxford or Cambridge He said neither, and that he was an aspirant for admission to the LSE When they fixed him up, the High Commission experts, who got his admission into the Nottingham University, later claimed that they had helped him with the LSE admission!

As was the custom in those days, Nehru, who took a degree from the LSE, qualified for the Bar and also got into the Indian Civil Service in the third attempt, two of his cousins being already in the ICS It was while in London that he fell in love with a Hungarian student at the LSE The parents of the two met and agreed to the marriage Unlike many other Indo-European marriages, it proved to be a very happy one, his Hungarian Jew wife completely Indianising herself, putting on saree and speaking Hindi and Kashmiri with such fluency that she passes off as a hundred per cent Kashmiri Panditani The two shared most values The scientific rationalist atmosphere, wherein Nehru was brought up, made him an atheist Morarji Desai, BK's boss, once tried to convince him of the existence of God, at a two-hour meeting on a Sunday At the end of the talk, he said "Of course BK, you believe in God " How? asked BK and Morarji told him he believed in Truth and Truth was God

Motilal Nehru (Dadaji) had once told BK that he had the greatest contempt for those who worked for their self-interest This was an axiom that BK remembered throughout his life and at three or four places in his memoirs he refers to this axiom He followed it scrupulously

Towards the end of his official career, he says, he did not have a roof of his own over his head and earned a monthly pension, after 43 years service, of Rs 611 (How the mathematical expert arrived at this figure is not comprehensible) Clearly he lived comfortably while in service but did not save money A plot was allotted to him in Vasant Vihar but he gave it back because he was away in the USA and could not build the home within the time limit laid down by the cooperative society His wife had bought a plot of land in Chhatarpur However, because of some controversy over the land in Chhatarpur he told his brother to sell it (for a song) It was with the proceeds of his father's home in Friend's Colony that he built a house in Kasauli where he now stays

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DURING his first posting in Hisar in 1934, he accepted a melon, the size of a cricket ball, from the field while undergoing training His British boss, Ivor Jones, told him this was unethical because when the *naib tehsildar,* escorting him in the fields, had given it to him in the presence of villagers he would himself take five, his Kanungo would take ten and the *patwari* twenty! Nehru never forgot this incident and observed the strictest standards of honesty and integrity From Hisar he went to Jalandhar, Dharamsala and finally landed in the department of which Girja Shankar Bajpai was in charge He became an expert in external finance, especially the sterling balances which India, to the chagrin of the British Government, had accumulated This expertise landed him in the post of Commissioner General for India in Washington, where he negotiated the first ever loans from the World Bank for the Second and Third Five Year Plans Thanks to the diplomatic skills that he had acquired, he was appointed India's Ambassador to Washington, the Commission General's Office then being wound up It is interesting to be told that the Indian Foreign Office seldom gave any briefing to a new incumbent He had himself to decide how issues were to be tackled or even protocol requirement His experience showed that, in international affairs, more business was really done and certainly more information exchanged, at night around the convivial table than in the stuffy atmosphere of government offices where every word uttered was faithfully recorded for the archives and history He was the instrument in getting badly needed arms in 1962 and food in 1965 With his contacts—he had access to the highest in Washington—these were purely public relations jobs Nehru tells us ruefully that after the disastrous debacle in 1962 he got a telegram asking for some arms in such a language that he felt humiliated and wept

It is a reflection on the working of the Foreign Office that no copies had to be kept of this "personal" telegram Says Nehru

> I put the telegram in my desk and there it remained without any other eye in the chancery seeing it What ultimately happened to it, I do not know, it is neither in my papers nor in the official documents in the Embassy In the Kennedy library where the letter exists, it is still classified as not open to public gaze (A mole in the embassy?)

This reviewer recalls its reproduction by Sudhir Ghosh an article in *The Statesman* in 1965

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THE book gives us interesting anecdotes and vignettes of H M Patel, T T Krishnamachari and Krishna Menon About the Mundhra case, he says the draft of the statement to be made in Parliament was prepared by H M Patel and B K Nehru It was approved by TTK However TTK retracted, flew to Bombay to tell H M Patel that he was sorry to have let him down The only copy of the draft with Nehru was taken away by the secretary of TTK and no trace of this is now available

There is plenty about Krishna Menon's antics, his drama in the United Nations General Assembly and the marathon debate Krishna Menon, the Defence Minister, turned down B G Kaul's assessment and misled Jawaharlal Nehru We are told that Krishna was appointed High Commissioner on Lord Mountbatten's recommendation, and had a mesmeric influence on Nehru, one possible reason being that he was the only one in India who had expertise on foreign affairs He bypassed regular channels and kept Nehru in the dark about many things .

When Nehru died BK came to Delhi In the post-funeral operations, when Sanjay and Rajiv were picking up the bones (flowers) of Nehru, BK was told by others of the Nehru clan to give a helping hand However, when he started to help, Indira frowned Nehru's feeling is that she did not want Nehru's mantle to fall on any Nehru other than her sons The message was clear BK withdrew

Lal Bahadur Shastri liked B K Nehru, who calls Shastri the incarnation of humility And, with his death, he says, "ended (with one solitary exception the rule of those in India who retained the high values of the freedom struggle"

Nehru was present when Shastri's body was received in Delhi When he asked Gopal Sarup Pathak who would succeed Shastri, he said either Chavan or Morarji Desai Asked about the prospects of Indira Gandhi succeeding him, Pathak turned up his nose and said "What nonsense! Who is going to vote for her?" Ten days later Indira Gandhi was the Prime Minister This is how events shaped themselves

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WHEN Nehru's assignment in Washington was to end he toyed with the idea of practising at the Supreme Court, and had himself enrolled, reviving his Inner Temple connection But this did not come about He also toyed with the idea of entering politics but as an independent Member of Parliament He was dissuaded by Vijayalakshmi Pandit and even Morarji Desai with whom his relations were closer and more intimate than with Indira Gandhi They told him that he must join the Congress, because the parliamentary practice was allotment of time to the parties as per their strength. An independent member's chances to speak were limited The Indian politician, according to Nehru,

> is incapable of imagining that there do exist people who think in terms of the good of the country than the good of certain individuals

Nehru thought well of the Bharatiya Janata Party and Atal Behari Vajpayee as "one of the most attractive, charming, erudite and sophisticated of men" and the party less hypocritical But cousin Dewan Anand Kumar, son of Dewan Narendranath, told him "You are forgetting the name which you bear and the family that you come from "

When Indira Gandhi was visiting Lyndon Johnson the State Department asked for advice on how she was to be addressed Nehru asked her and she said that her Ministers addressed her as "Sir" Later when the Queen referred to her, Nehru narrated to her what he had told Johnson The Queen could not help but burst out laughing, the time prescribed by protocol was not observed

Or as a sequel to what Morarji told his British host, Callaghan, that he did not drink whisky, but was drinking his own urine At the banquet, a glass with yellowish liquid was placed before him He asked Callaghan if it was whisky and was told

> No Sir, we have got it specially for you It is the Queen's own

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NEHRU had three gubernatorial assignments of North-Eastern India, Jammu and Kashmir, and Gujarat He writes regretfully of the influx of Bangladeshi Muslims coming in large numbers and playing a role as a vote-bank, the politicians shamefully ignoring this In the NEFA area, he ruefully says,

> the concept of bribery was unkown We have 'raised' the people to our own bribe-taking, falsehood-speaking, violence-breeding self-seeking form of civilisation

In Manipur, where there were no licences or permits to give, politicians openly "sold" appointments

Nehru unfolds the story of the dealings with the Jammu and Kashmir Government and tells things that are not commonly known He says that Farooq Abdullah is a genuinely secular person, decidedly considers himself to be an Indian and is anti-Pakistani His son was educated in Sanawar and is married to a Hindu girl But Farooq, as the Sheikh thought, was an immature politician, a poor administrator misguided by sycophants When the Centre wanted Nehru to dismiss Farooq, Nehru stood firm He reproduces the text of his note to New Delhi It explains the background of his transfer to Gujarat, his last assignment

As a disciplined civil servant for most his life, he observed strictly the rule that no copy of any official paper be retained in the private possession of any individual it was much later in his gubernatorial assignments that he saw the wisdom of keeping some The book, therefore, is based on his phenomenal memory, helped only by his engagement diaries or press clippings for a period kept by his wife

A useful addition to autobiographical literature and a well-produced book ■

Higher Education : Autonomy and Bureaucratisation

I find myself in substantial agreement with the document 'Teachers Perspective on Reforming Higher Education in India' prepared by the JNU Teachers Association as published in your issue of September 27, 1997 However, I find it rather limited in its approach I wish to also record my partial disagreement with the line of argument advanced there

While I subscribe to the hypothesis that bureaucratisation of higher education is a menace, the remedy for it does not lie in harping upon the need for greater autonomy Autonomy for teachers in higher education is a pre-condition for competent and creative functioning of the system and there cannot be much disagreement as to its need or urgency Alongwith it however goes a related requirement greater professionalisation It is the absence of professionalisation and its related mode of functioning which puts higher education in the situation in which it finds itself

Bureaucrats are obliged to deal with issues as they arise from time to time, Most academics do not even recognise the existence of these problems. According to their customary mode of functioning, they see no other way to deal with them except to increase their control over the system of higher education When that happens, and it has been happening for a number of decades now, the situation begins to worsen and that is precisely what has been happening

An equally dangerous menace is the growing politicisation of the system of higher education In other words, there are two dangers with which the system is faced One is bureaucratisation and the other is politicisation To underplay the second danger would be wrong and misleading both in theory and practice In theory, politicisation introduces perverse priorities into the system In practice, what happens is not only wrong from the academic point of view but also because patently illegal things get done as a result of the involvement of politicians Politicisation is, therefore, as much of a menace as bureaucratisation is

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IT must be, however, acknowledged that the political process has a momentum of its own It cannot be controlled beyond a point As citizens, teachers constitute a very small percentage of the population and cannot influence it except marginally It is here that, in my view, the element of professionalisation enters the scene To put it no more strongly, it is only by being professional that it is possible to combat politicisation as also bureaucratisation

Most teachers do not function on the professional plane and, quite often, connive with those who are politically powerful Therefore, professionalism gets further hurt To know politicians is one thing but to play their game in the universities and colleges is another thing That is what a large number of us do In pursuit of our petty and self serving interests, we sometimes even invoke their help In return, we are prepared to do whatever they want us to do This unholy nexus between politicians and teachers (more precisely, teacher leaders) needs to be recognised and put a stop to

Another dimension of the functioning of political leaders too must be understood Most of them lack the necessary competence to understand academic issues What they are interested in are not academic matters but issues relating to appointments, promotions and such other things. The way to deal with politicians, therefore, is to confront them on the professional plane and without fear of what they can do or seeking any favour from them

On the bureaucratic plane, however, the mode of confrontation has to be different Bureaucrats understand things on the policy plane Therefore, they have to be met on that plane Most academics are, however, exceptionally weak in regard to policy issues or bureaucratic matters They know the discipline in which they are trained But educational policy too is a discipline by itself It too has to be studied Unless academics do that, they are generally outargued and outmanoeuvred by the bureaucrats In this respect, I hold most academics lacking in the ability to protect their own interests

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IN brief, what the academics have to do is to improve their professional training and professional capability At one time, particularly in the early seventies when teachers in universities and colleges were equated with Class I officers of the Government of India, most teachers felt highly gratified Today, the situation has changed Talent is shunning government service, even the armed forces, and is opting more and more for business

Salaries are several times higher than in teaching or in any other profession, unless it be something like law or medicine where the person does not receive a salary and everything depends upon his ability and his capacity to work What this means is that no matter what salaries are paid in the teaching profession, talent is not likely to be attracted beyond a point Only those who are interested in teaching and research will opt for this profession At least for another decade or so, this is more likely to happen than otherwise

This being so, the issue has to be faced not in terms of rhetoric but in terms of concrete policies Concretely speaking, politicisation has to be fought partly by eschewing the kind of values that most politicians stand for and partly through a refusal to collude with them and the point of view that they represent Bureaucrats, however, have to be opposed on the plane of argument and analysis This would require both greater critical ability and greater professionalisation Above all, unless those in the JNU and others who think like them, band themselves together on the professional plane and make a heroic attempt to do so, things would continue to be what they are

It is not possible to expand on these points in a Letter to the Editor One thing, however, may be underlined Whatever little talent is found in universities and colleges is so unconcerned with academic matters that, on the whole, there is a vacuum at the decision-making level This vacuum is generally filled up by the bureaucrats and this damages the system Something has to be done, therefore, by those who understand these issues to assert themselves on the professional plane Unless that can be done, the situation would continue to be perilous

October 8, 1997
Sarvapriya Vihar,
New Delhi

Amrik Singh

Admission System in Delhi University : Lessons for the Future

SUSHIL KUMAR SEN and M M BATRA

The admission process in the Delhi University is over Paradoxically enough, the university authorities have not learnt any lesson from past experience They have failed to take care of the problems faced by the students and their parents/guardians during the preceding years The students or their parents/guardians have to run from pillar to post for admission of their wards They have to collect admission forms and prospectus from different colleges of the Delhi University in different courses though they have to take admission only in one college In this process, they have to run in the hot season wasting a lot of money on conveyance and sometime the parents have to take leave from their respective offices due to the illogical system of admission Thus the present system not only results in the wastage of a lot of time, money and energy but also leads to manipulations in the admission process

The present system is not only inconvenient to the admission-seekers and their parents but also increases the workload for the admission authorities Since a student applies for admission to a number of colleges, he frequently changes colleges and subjects according to the chances that become available to him Later on, students start migrating from one college to another and change from one course to another as and when vacancy arises in this process True, the Delhi University has a system of refunding the fee of the student with nominal deduction in July (Rs 5 only) and with a deduction of Rs 50 upto August 14 But this does not solve the problem, because the fee is generally returned after two months and the parents of wards who have fixed salary have to suffer a lot by depositing fees in two or three different colleges

This adds to the workload of the administration of the different colleges because their Accounts Department has to return the fee and take care that only genuine ones get their fees back More than often, it has been seen that there is manipulation in the process also

Moreover, since there are vacancies in different colleges and in different courses at different stages, there is a lot scope for backdoor admissions not on

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merit but for other considerations. Additionally, there is no systematic procedure followed sometimes in this admission process Even in the so-called staff quota, it has been seen that there has been a lot of bungling even where the staff of the Delhi University, both teaching and non-teaching, are directly affected In the preceding years, there have been a lot of irregularities even in the so-called staff quota for the university employees Though initially it was notified by different colleges that the staff quota will be decided on merits of the applicants and will be notified by the end of June, in some cases it was seen that the list was never notified and admission was done as late as in August and thereafter and that too on considerations other than merit If such types of irregularities are committed in case of admissions related to the staff of the Delhi University causing a lot of bitterness, one can well imagine the level of irregularities and bitterness generated among the students and parents of wards involved in this admission process For instance, a post-graduate student quoted her horrible experience of admission in an MA course in History in the Delhi Unversity She appeared in the test for admission and the list was never put on the notice board and there were a lot of irregularities and backdoor admissions She applied in the School of Correspondence and Continuing Education in September She was asked to pay late fee for no fault of hers She paid the late fee and in January she was sent the examination form and the next month she was informed that she had not been admitted and the late fee paid by her was forfeited So she lost a year due to no fault of hers but irregularities in the admission system

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A student applied for admission in B Lib Science in June in the University of Delhi The result of MA (History) was declared in the first week of August and the admission process was completed in July, again without notifying the list As a result, this poor student and so many others with around 55 per cent marks in MA (History) could not get admission, though applicants with 50 per cent marks were admitted The last date for admission was extended by the Delhi University till August 14 But the so-called Head of the Department of Library Science refused to admit the student on merit Such types of cases happened in the prestigious Delhi University and the innocent students are not competent enough to challenge Even if they dare to challenge it, their complaints gather dust in the University office

Another type of manipulation done in the admission is through sports quota, cultural activities and other type of quotas There is no fool-proof system to check these irregular admissions There is one more source of manipulation in the admission process, that is, through inter-college migration The student gets admission in one college with lower minimum cut-off and thereafter he migrates to another college where the level of cut-off is higher In this way, he makes a mockery of the admission process based on merit The above types of manipulations can be seen if an honest examination is done of the admission system during the last decade in the Delhi University

Now the pertinent question is what is the solution for these problems? No doubt, thousands of students are involved in the admission process and this is a very difficult task to achieve hundred per cent accuracy but at least one can strive for a just system of admission based on merit, not on other considerations With the advent of the computer system, we can ensure a near-accurate admission process, saving a lot of time, money and energy of the students, their parents/guardians and the admission authorities

There should be a centralised system of admission and students should be asked to give their choice of courses and colleges on the application form In this way, the students will not have to spend lot of time, money and energy filling applications in different colleges but give their preferences only in one application form With the help of the computer programme by an expert computer programmer—and such computer programmers there are many now—the admission list of students and courses in which they are admitted can be notified expeditiously In this way the admission authorities will also save a lot of time, money and energy Of course, admissions based on other considerations will be reduced This will add to the credibility of this premier university

Every year we think of improving the admission system but postpone it to the next year and that next year never comes It will be proper to implement this new system in future admissions Similarly, there should be centralised admissions for sports and other cultural activities through the centralised computer system Moreover, there should be no inter-college migration in the First Year of admission In any case, the minimum percentage cut-off for the admission should be taken into consideration in any admission and there should be no staff or Principal's quota in the transparent admission process We hope that the Delhi University as a premier Central University will set an ideal example for other universities ■

On Queen's Pronouncements and Robin Cook's Indiscretions

G S BHARGAVA

A friend from Bombay who is a Public Relations Officer of a multinational company said the other day that mentioning the source of information, especially comments within quotes, and keeping apart comment and news—on which journalists of my generation insist—are old fashioned According to him, they are no longer the vogue as standards of journalism and one should bear this in mind while judging today's newspapers and the young journalists manning them He was joining issue with my specific grouses about trends in some newspapers I thought he was unduly cynical but the way the newspapers reported the Delhi leg of the visit of the British Queen and her consort has awakened me to reality

More relevantly, has the Indian press contributed to the tailspin into which Indo-British relations have gone during the north Indian part of the British Queen's visit and if so how? The *Daily Telegraph* editorial berating the British Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, for the controversy attending the event, said so It wrote

> Much of the resentment surrounding the state visit has been inspired by an Indian media whose tone ranges from the indifferent to the abusive

Unfortunately, this sentence has not been included in the lengthy extracts from the editorial carried by most of our newspapers It seems the *Business Standard* is the sole exception in this respect

A BBC correspondent who has been a vocal admirer of the vibrancy and verve of the Indian newspapers has also been critical of the way the visit has been reported by many of our newspapers He has nearly accused the media, meaning the English newspapers, of queering the pitch for what would have otherwise been a ceremonial occasion Whether the perceived bias of the newapapers has been provoked by the way the British officials conducted themselves towards Indian journalists is a different matter, even if germane to the discussion

Let us trace the spat, as newspaper reports initially called what became a slanging match which overshadowed the royal sojourn According to *The Hindu,* which has a seasoned resident correspondent in Pakistan, the British Foreign Secretary told reporters in Islamabad

> We are no more the British empire to fix the direction of any state in the subcontinent

He was apparently responding to the Pakistan journalists' questions whether Britain would ask India to settle the Jammu and Kashmir issue with Pakistan because that was what the Queen's banquet speech in Islamabad had been taken to imply, although she did not mention Kashmir directly The report quoted at length a Pakistan Foreign Ministry press release that the British Foreign Secretary in his talks with the Pakistan Prime Minister 'expressed willingness to help achieve a negotiated and peaceful settlement of the Kashmir dispute'

In the words of a New Delhi report in *The Hindustan Times* on the day after the Queen's speech in Islamabad, it did not 'go down well with the Foreign Office', although its quotation of the British monarch's remark as "urging India and Pakistan to resolve their 'historic disagreements'" did not sound particularly offensive to me The report did not say whether the objection was to Britain presuming to advise India and Pakistan or to describing India-Pakistan problems as 'historic disagreements'

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As for Robin Cook's indiscretions, the same report cited Pakistan media reports that he 'would definitely take up the issue' of Kashmir with India and that 'he would offer a mediatory role (by) the British Government in resolving Indo-Pak disputes when he meets the Prime Minister in New Delhi' Surprisingly, the correspondent said they are 'being overlooked by the External Affairs Ministry' with the spokesman saying no such move had been made and that India would react 'only if Cook seeks to intervene in the Kashmir affair' *The Telegraph* version of the quote is

> Britain would be happy in any manner possible to facilitate the resolution of the Kashmir problem

I could not find a more explicit version of the offensive observation in any of our newspapers The

Pakistan media have reportedly carried such reports but it is not clear on what basis

Suddenly on the day the British guests landed in Delhi, *The Indian Express* resumed the theme, citing 'officials of the Ministry of External Affairs' that the Prime Minister was 'extremely riled at the evidence that the Queen of England's constitutional position was being misused by the Labour leadership to interfere in Kashmir' According to the report, that had provoked the Prime Minister 'to lash out at British presumption over daring to interfere in Kashmir' A remark attributed to Inder Kumar Gujral that Britain 'is a declining power with very little significance in world affairs' was denied by a UNI report published alongside saying that Gujral did not 'flay the British leadership' *The Asian Age* report put Gujral's description of Britain as "a third rate power"

Incidentally, the *Deccan Herald* version of the denial is interesting because it is perhaps nearer the truth and is also comprehensive It read

> The spokesman (of the External Affairs Ministry) said these remarks (describing Britain as a third rate power) were made at an informal, private, closed-door meeting and as such there is no foundation (for them)

The spokesman also added that the remarks attributed to the Prime Minister, had no relation to the contents of the Cairo discussions where the remark was said to have been made A *Hindustan Times* cartoon summed up the position neatly It showed Gujral and Cook face to face with their respective remarks struck out

The Times of India which ignored the rumpus on the opening day of the visit returned to it with a vengeance on the following day Its report on the President's state banquet to the Queen said

> Ignoring Indian sensibilities on the raising of bilateral issues by outside countries, the visiting British Queen used much of the same language that she had in Islamabad last week to urge the South Asians to 'bury historical hostilities for good'

The reports of the event in most other newspapers, especially *The Hindustan Times, The Hindu, The Deccan Herald, The Statesman* and *The Telegraph* did not, however, substantiate the charge Even *The Indian Express* did not share the slant Incidentally, these newspapers quoted at some length from the speeches of the President and the Queen, which *The Times of India* dismissed in a polemical summary

It seems, in retrospect, that it is not so much what has been said by the Queen or Robin Cook in Pakistan or here which outraged some of the journalists, including those highly rated, but the fact that the British Labour Party leaders have been catering to their pro-Pakistan constituents in their pronouncements on Kashmir and India That has been extrapolated to the ongoing event to colour the perspective

While it is too much to expect clinical objectivity from journalists, especially on nationally sensitive issues, preconceived perceptions should not let professionals go overboard For instance, when Cook issued a formal, written statement denying that he had made any public pronouncement on Kashmir in Pakistan, one of the correspondents said

> What if he has not? The record of his party speaks for itself

I am afraid such a mental baggage does not yield fair reporting And it has not in this case

The episode has also cast a shadow on the British reputation for suavity and diplomatic finesse The visiting British Foreign Secretary had an informal meeting with a few Indian correspondents with a view to mollifying them and, as he put it, to keep the record straight When they tried to corner him, he apparently lost his cool and accused them of being unprofessional Luckily, it was an off-the-record encounter, otherwise the fat would have been fully in the fire ■

DANG Akali-BJP Government in Punjab

(Continued from page 12)

Punjab Municipal Corporation Act with impunity All the three corporations have become non-performing

c) *Personnel Department* Rapid transfers o bureaucrats became a scandal during the regime o Beant Singh and Harcharan Singh Brar. They ar more rapid now

d) *Relief Department* Discrimination in the matte of relief to the people hit hard by havoc caused i the Malout Mukatsar areas by defective sewerag and by heavy rains has proved two things Th ruling men believe that what they want is the la and many bureaucrats believe that they are ther to carry out the wishes of the ruling men eve though these may be in gross violation of the rule and regulations

The top-heavy administration (especially th police) is becoming even more top-heavy contrar to the promises made to make it less top-heavy

In sum, the overall assessment of the Akali-BJ Government is definitely negative Its prestige ha gone down Its support have been declining A goo section of the people still has faith in Badal but eve they are having doubts whether he can withstan and overcome various pressures ■

Freedom from the Margins

Coastal Communities celebrate the Golden Jubilee of India's Independence as Freedom from the Shrimp Industry

VANDANA SHIVA

Dr Vandana Shiva is a noted ecologist A recipient of the 'Right to Livelihood Award', she is the Director of Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology (which functions from Dehra Dun and New Delhi) On August 15 this year, on the occasion of the golden jubilee of our independence, she was with the coastal communities leading their marches in Tamil Nadu and Pondicherry to implement the Supreme Court judgement on the shrimp industry She has penned her reflections on the significance of those actions in the following piece

Throughout the coastal States of India—West Bengal, Orissa, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Goa, Maharashtra—the coastal communities Celebrated August 15 differently from the official India with its empty rhetoric and the radical India with its negativity of Black Flag demonstrations against the failures of the last 50 years Under the leadership of the National Action Committee Against Coastal Industrial Aquaculture (NACACIA), the coastal communities marched to shrimp farms which were banned by the historic order of the Supreme Court on December 11, 1996 but have continued to operate in total contempt of the Court order They proudly carried the Indian tricolour and sang the national song *"Vande Mataram"* From the coast of India a new meaning is being given to freedom both for the people and the country For the victims of the aquaculture industry, Independence Day was a day for celebrating and asserting their sovereignty over their natural resources and their freedom to engage in their livelihood It was a day for re-committing themselves to continue their struggle to free the coast of the destructive aquaculture industry It was a day for condemning the attempts by the government, politicians and the industrialists to subvert the Supreme Court judgement which has defended their rights and their coast

Freedom as the Right of Life

OUR national song begins with the words

"Vande Mataram
Sujalam, Suphalam "

referring to the abundant water and fruits that this rich land has gifted her people In the coastal areas today there is no drinking water, peasants cannot get the fruits of the earth, and fishworkers cannot get the fruits of the sea because of the ecological havoc caused by the shrimp industry

One hectare of an industrial shrimp farm requires 120,000 cubic metres of sea water annually This 12 metres of saline water over and above the water in the coastal ecosystems creates serious problems of ground water salinisation

Ground water salinisation is leading to a major drinking water famine causing tremendous difficulties for the women of the coastal regions Women are to work for 10 miles and to pay Rs 5 to collect a pot of water Since the people's livelihood is being destroyed as a result of the destruction of coastal ecosystems, this additional burden is becoming economically unsustainable, and families are migrating out of the coastal villages

The seepage from the aqua farms creates salinisation and waterlogging of the neighbouring agricultural farms Salinisation of land creates a forced displacement of peasants and farmers from coastal agriculture Some of the coastal regions are the most fertile bread-baskets of the country Nellore is named after "Nellu" which means rice in Telugu This rice bowl is now totally destroyed as a result of the impact of shrimp farms

The Cauvery delta is another fertile area where agricultural land is being converted into shrimpt farms

The destruction of the rice bowls in the coastal districts will contribute to major food insecurity as well as to massive unemployment generating, economic insecurity and social conflict

Factory farming of shrimp requires four to six tons per hectare of artificial feed Only 16 7 per cent of this feed are converted into shrimp biomass The rest is converted into pollution, which deteriorates water quality inside the pond and in the ecosystem

It is this build-up of pollution that is responsible for collapse of shrimp production in a short period and for the destruction of the productivity of estuarine and coastal waters

Industrial shrimp (prawn) farming is by its very nature non-sustainable Intensive farming collapses in five years, semi-intensive farming collapses in 15 years and extensive farming collapses in 25 years On the other hand traditional polyculture systems which work with nature's cycles are perennial

Marine fisheries is destroyed in three ways by industrial shrimp farms

- Wild fry is the major source of seed in shrimp farms For every single fry of the commercially desirable P Monodon caught, more than 1000 other marine species are wasted as "fry by catch" leading to species loss and extinction
- Fish caught at sea is a major source of shrimp feed Each ton of industrial shrimp required 10 times its weight in marine fish for conversion to feed
- The pollution from shrimp farms also kills fish life and destroys maine resources

The argument used to justify the large-scale destruction by the shrimp industry is the dollar earning that it brings to the shrimp industry even though it is made to appear that the private profits of the industry are an increase in national wealth However, behind every dollar of earnings by the shrimp industry, there is 200 dollar worth of damage of local ecology and local economy if the ecological footprint of industrially produced shrimp is taken into account

The ecological footprint of a productive system is the productive ecosystem required to supply inputs to the production and to assimilate waste outputs from the production cycle

Entry 1 M^2 of an industrial shrimp farm can require up to 200 M^2 of main and coastal ecosystems for input supply of shrimp seed and water and for sinks for water and pollution

The destruction of coastal ecosystems leads to the destruction of coastal livelihoods It is in recognition of this fact that the Supreme Court ordered closure of the shrimp factories within the coastal zone in order to protect the fundamental right to life that is guaranteed under the Constitution It is this freedom as the right to life of the people which was being defended by the coastal communities in their celebration of theirs and India's freedom

Freedom from Corruption

THE shrimp industry is a breeding ground for ecological as well as political pollution which is known as corruption While multinational corporations are the driving force in the shrimp feed industry and in the shrimp trade, our politicians and bureaucrats are also involved The shrimp scam—the involvement of politicians in *benami* involvement in the shrimp industry—is part of the reason that the Aquaculture Authority Billl (AAB) was rushed through the Rajya Sabha Through the AAB, the politicians are using the structures of democratic India meant to protect the people as instruments for their own power and accumulation and as an assault on the fundamental rights and civil liberties of the coastal people Chief Ministers of every coastal State have interests in it MPs, MLAs bureaucrats are involved The Finance Minister himself is supposed to be involved in the shrimp industry The Meghna farm in Shrikali in Tamil Nadu is reported to be owned by his brother-in-law It is also reported that the Finance Minister himself has a shrimp farm in Ramnathpuram to establish which he cut down 5000 coconut trees

The Prime Minister had stated in his 'Quit India' celebration speech, that those who hold high offices and are corrupt are anti-national and traitors

In his Independence Day speech from the ramparts of the Red Fort, he stated

> Anyone with any proof of corruption against any of my cabinet member can come to me and action will be taken without reservation

During the golden jubilee year of India's independence we would like the Prime Minister to establish his commitment to wipe out corruption by taking action against the "traitors" involved in the shrimp scam We would like the Prime Minister not to participate in the nurturing and protection of corruption by letting his cabinet undermine the Supreme Court judgement by bringing the AAB to the Lok Sabha Corruption is not just a matter of bribes It is the institutionalised loot of the resources of the poor by those in power Let the Prime Minister begin the cleaning up of corruption in his government by investigating the shrimp scam and by implementing the Supreme Court judgement

Attempts of subversion of the Supreme Court order through the AAB and the review petitions are a subversion of our justice system and our democratic fabric Freedom is the defence of our democratic structures The people are defending these structures while those in power are attempting to destroy them

Freedom from Fear of Mafia Rule

SINCE the aqua industry has been established by violating every law of the land and by trampling on the rights of local communities, it continues to operate only through the rule of terror and violence While each farm creates only employment for two people per hectare in the productive activity, there is a major "employment generation" through the need for private securities and private armies to defend the shrimp factories from the people whose water, land and biodiversity is being destroyed and who are rising in revolt An attempt is being made to contain the local agitations through money power and muscle power In spite of threats from the shrimp mafia, coastal people took out their freedom marches on August 15 even in the hot land of mafia rule People are showing that they are fearless because they are engaged in a just struggle to defend their lives

Fifty years after independence the challenge is to protect the freedoms we gained half a century ago, and to expand and deepen the meaning of freedom beyond our fifty years legacy so that it becomes a reality for the eighty per cent of India which has been marginalised by the five development decades and which is being rendered dispensable by the new economic policies of trade liberalisation and globalisation The shrimp industry is a child of these "reforms" which are based on turning the "licence-permit raj" into the "licence to loot and the permit to plunder raj"

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OUR Finance Minister, P Chidambaram has said

> So, to those of you who wish to come to India, I say, come and stay there for a long time the last time you came to India to take a look, you stayed 200 years So, this time if you come, you must be prepared to stay for another 200 years That is where the largest rewards are

While the Finance Minister in whose hands the country has trusted its economic planning is inviting invaders to loot and recolonise us, he is also personally looting the resources of the poor coastal communities while maintaining the image of "Mr Clean"

Today, India seeks her freedom not just from the foreign powers who are attempting once again to colonise her She seeks freedom from the political class which is dismembering her ecologically and socially And this new freedom struggle for a free India is appropriately beginning in her social and environmental margins—from the coasts, led by women, the traditional fishworkers and the landless or small peasants The rebirth of a free India is taking place amidst the brutalisation and debasement of murders, abductions, caste and communal wars, political corruption and criminalisation of politics and the destruction of the natural and economic wealth of the people In the margins, a new India is being born—an India built on the principles of sustainability and justice, of peace and harmony of democracy and diversity

The freedom from the margins, the freedom of the marginalised, will be India's real search for freedom This second freedom struggle has just begun ■

HK DUA

Quality of Governance

(Continued from page 7)

not bothered to measure up to the challenge and instead have used power as an instrument for personal and party ends The result has been a disastrous decline in the quality of administration, a wide gulf between the rulers and the ruled and loss of moral and political authority of the rulers As a consequence, small problems not resolved effectively and in time have become too serious to be tackled by normal civil means

Local groups have come up in several parts of the country and at places have taken to militancy and violence a weakened administration is finding it difficult to meet Faced with a violent situation the District Collector gives in and rings up the nearest sub-area commander for help Generally, peace gets restored after a flag march or sometimes after a more demonstrative exhibition of state power The men in uniform luckily do not relish such assignments and go back to their duty at the border or in the cantonments They cannot be normally liking pulling a trigger against their own countrymen

What about the political rulers? Have they ever sat back and thought of the dangers involved in their repeated admission of failure to manage the nation? They have not pondered over either the risks of a greater loss of power and authority and the blow the use of the Army renders to their prestige among the people Also, overexposure to violent public protest can alienate the Army from the people—a phenomenon which is to no one's advantage Ideally, the Army should create fear abroad and be a friend at home If there are recalcitrant groups at home challenging the authority of the state they should be tackled preferably without the help of the Armed Forces

Our Armed Forces function under a democratic political system and have shown ready willingness to abide by the doctrine that the civil authority has the final say This, however, enjoins on the political leaders the duty to provide the country better standards of governance than they have in the last several years The authority of a government and the people who man it ultimately depends on the quality of governance, how sensitive it is to the social and economic needs of the people and how earnest it is in tackling their problems The task of the rulers ultimately is to work for the people They do not take long to notice a ruler's sincerity, which in turn increases his or her moral and political authority Unfortunately, most leaders across the political spectrum do not understand this simple and elementary truth ■

(Courtesy *The Times of India*)

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS (OCTOBER 12-18, 1997)

NATIONAL

October 12
- ➢ On his way back from Egypt, Prime Minister I K Gujral, reacting to British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook's remarks in Islamabad, is reported to have told senior journalists and editors accompanying him "A third-rate power has presumed to say that they have a historical responsibility to solve the Kashmir issue " The previous evening he addressed a gathering of Egyptian intellectuals in Cairo and said Britain had no business to offer mediation (on the Kashmir "dispute" between India and Pakistan) since they were the ones who created the problem
- ➢ Defence Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav briefs the press after his five-day visit to Russia and informs that India and Russia have extended a long-term military and technical cooperation programme by a decade to 2010, and Russia has given an assurance that they would not sell arms to Pakistan
- ➢ BJP leaders L K Advani, Atal Behari Vajpayee and UP Chief Minister Kalyan Singh meet BSP President Kanshi Ram and former UP Chief Minister Ms Mayawati and resolve their differences over implementation of the SC/ST Act and transfer of bureaucrats
- ➢ Queen Elizabeth II of UK arrives in New Delhi on a six-day state visit to India

October 13
- ➢ British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, prior to his meeting with Prime Minister Gujral, issues a statement saying - "I welcome the assurance given by the Indian Government that reports that their Prime Minister had described Britain as a third-rate power are without foundation I gave no interview, press conference or public statement on Kashmir while in Pakistan "
- ➢ Speaking at President K R Narayanan's banquet, Queen Elizabeth II refers to the example of the European Union and advises the countries of the Indian subcontinent to resolve their "historical hostilities" within the framework of SAARC
- ➢ BJP President L K Advani and Vice-President Kalyan Singh declare at the national convention of the Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha that they would build a Ram Mandir at Ayodhya once they come to power at the Centre and "no force on earth" could now prevent it
- ➢ CPI-M asks all its members from district committee level upwards to give a detailed account of their income and property to the party leadership
- ➢ President of the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind Syed Asad Madani demands a law to provide compensation to the victims of all the riots since independence as ruled by the Delhi High Court for the victims of the 1984 anti-Sikh riots

October 14
- ➢ Union Finance Ministry proposes a Rs 75,000 crore cut in the Ninth Plan outlay in order to meet the extra burden of implementation of the recommendations of the Pay Commission
- ➢ Queen Elizabeth II visits Jallianwala Bagh and places a wreath in memory of those who were killed by the British troops commanded by Brigadier General Reginald Dyer Queen's consort, Prince Phillip, however, tells his official escort that the Jallianwala Bagh Memorial Trust's account of the 1919 massacre was "vastly exaggerated" Later the royal couple visit the Golden Temple, do not stand up to receive expensive gifts and refuse to eat the *prasad* customarily offered to all who come to the shrine

October 15
- ➢ Union Home Minister Indrajit Gupta and visiting Russian Deputy Prime Minister A S Kulikov sign a protocol for exchange of information to combat organised crime, terrorism and drug-trafficking and for regular exchange of police officials for specialised training
- ➢ Prime Minister Gujral inaugurates the Sixtysixth General Assembly of the International Criminal Police Organisation (Interpol), and calls for an universal extradition treaty as also an international code of conduct to check white collar crimes
- ➢ Queen Elizabeth II confers an honorary knighthood on Dr Jamshed J Irani, the Managing Director of Tata Iron and Steel Company Ltd

October 16
- ➢ Congress President Sitaram Kesri presents his action plan to PCC and CLP leaders, sets a two-month deadline to revitalise the party and prepare for the elections
- ➢ BJP postpones its plenary session scheduled to be held in Kanpur in the first week of December and decides to continue with L K Advani as the President if there are indications of an early mid-term poll
- ➢ In a statement issued in Srinagar (J & K) the Hurriyat Conference asserts they had been assured by the US Embassy officials in Delhi that the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front is not on the "watch list" of the US State Department as a possible terrorist outfit

October 17
- ➢ US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Thomas R Pickering begins in New Delhi his official dialogue with Foreign Secretary K Raghunath During the dialogue the US official says cross-border terrorism is "a very big problem" and the US decision to ban Harkat-ul-Ansar "is a reflection how seriously the US shares India's concern"
- ➢ Congress President Sitaram Kesri appoints N D Tiwari as the President of the UPCC
- ➢ A huge rally is organised by the ruling Shiromani Akali Dal at Jalandhar (Punjab) and the city is decorated to welcome Prime Minister Gujral and thank him for waiving the State's loan of Rs 8500 crores it had taken from the Union Government

October 18
- ➢ US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Thomas R. Pickering, in the course of his "dialogue" with Foreign Secretary K Raghunath, offers to support India for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council if it is backed by Asia which must decide whether the seat is to go to one country or be shared on rotation basis Raghunath

rejects the offer saying a rotating membership can't be permanent and the criteria should be on a global, non-discriminatory and equitable basis

- Two bomb blasts within a span of five minutes and within 200 meters of each in north-west Delhi kill a woman and injure more than 20 persons
- BSP Ministers stay away from a Cabinet meeting in Lucknow of the coalition Ministry headed by the BJP Chief Minister, Kalyan Singh

INTERNATIONAL

October 12
- Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan arrest four Pakistani citizens who, claims the ISI, were agents of the Indian agency RAW
- General Tiaffa, the War Minister in the government of former Marxist leader Denis Sassou Nguesso of Congo, tells *Reuter* that his forces have wrested two towns and the Pool region surrounding the capital Brazzaville and they have encircled the Presidential Palace and the troops loyal to President Pascal Lissoubu at the airport
- Ukrainian Communist leader Pyotr Simonenko opens the Eleventh Congress of the Communist Party of Ukraine attended by thousands of delegates and guests from all over the world
- President of the Supreme Federal Tribunal of Brazil Colso de Mello announces he will not attend a state banquet in honour of the visiting US President Bill Clinton because the latter criticised Brazil and its legal system
- Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) and Awami National Party, the two main allies of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League, accuse the government of not honouring the commitments of the alliance

October 13
- Britain and the USA defend their stand at the International Court of Justice that the two accused Libyans must be extradited to England and tried for bombing the Pan Am flight 103 which exploded over the village Lockerbie in December 1988 killing all 259 on board and 11 on the ground
- Former Prime Minister of Pakistan Benazir Bhutto tells reporters in Karachi that the Swiss Bank "accounts are not my accounts"

October 14
- Islamabad daily *The Muslim* quotes "reliable sources" that Pakistan, after Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub Khan's meetings with American and Israeli officials in New York last month, "is cautiously but gradually moving towards recognising Israel" as a step towards achieving some progress in its Kashmir policy
- Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan chief Qazi Hussain Ahmad, addressing a large gathering in Lahore, says the Nawaz Sharif Government should immediately target all Indian installations and cities to give India "a clear message" that would help "strengthen the resistance movement in Kashmir"
- Chinese Government issues a statement through the Xinhua News Agency to urge the Taiwan leaders to agree to "political talks" on reunification on the basis of equality between their ruling parties
- Communist Refoundation leader Fansto Bernatti agrees to support the coalition Italian Government headed by Romano Prodi in return for a 35-hour working week beginning from 2001, early retirement benefit for manual workers and injecting $ 295 million in the employment sector

October 15
- Arundhati Roy (from Kerala) wins the 1997 Booker Prize for her debut novel *The God of Small Things*
- A truck bomb blast and subsequent gun battle in the heart of Colombo kills 17, injures more than a hundred and severely damages the 39 storey twin trade towers and several hotels
- Mufti Mohammad Owais, the chief of Harkat-ul-Ansar, recently identified by the USA as a terrorist outfit, threatens in Lahore to intensify the organisation's activities in the wake of the US action
- A special congress of tribal insurgents in south-eastern Bangladesh ratifies a draft agreement with the government to end a 22-year old jungle war
- White House turns over to the investigators additional tapes covering another 30 fund-raising events during US President Bill Clinton's first term taking the total so far to more than 50 video and 125 audio tapes
- United States blasts off the Cassini and Huygens space probes to begin a seven year voyage to *Saturn* and its biggest moon Titan

October 16
- A US State Department spokesman tells the press that the Clinton Administration has made it clear that the Kashmir issue is not central to the "strategic dialogue" between the US and India
- Britain's Labour Government says it would ban foreign donations to political parties and all donations above $ 8111 will have to made public
- Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi wins vote of confidence, 319 to 285, and announces a revised budget

October 17
- UN spokesman Fred Eckhard says Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary-General, is extremely worried about the pattern of power-grabbing in Africa, not only overthrowing a government by force but involvement in neighbouring states Eckhard cites the example of recent events in the former Zaire and the neighbouring Republic of Congo
- US Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) arrests 13 persons including six marines for trafficking in arms stolen from US military bases
- Remains of Earnesto "Che" Guevara are finally buried in the mausoleum specially built in the Revolution Square in Santa Clara, which was liberated by Che in 1958 More than 100,000 people come from all over Cuba to witness the burial with a military parade and a 21-gun salute The ceremony is attended by Fidel Castro and members of the Polit-Bureau of the Cuban Communist Party

October 18
- Chief of the Iranian Navy Admiral Ali Akbar Ahmadian says Iran has developed missile launching boats and has weapons which make it the strongest missile power in the Gulf region
- Singapore port authorities launch air operations to spray chemicals to disperse the 25,000 tonne oil spill as a result of a night time collision between a Thai registered crude carrier and a Cyprus-flagged oil tanker
- Russia and France announce their decision to oppose any US-British demand for more sanctions against Iraq
- British Finance Minister Gordon Brown hints that Britain will not join a single European currency for at least the next five years ■

Posted at GPO in New Delhi on October 21/23, 1997 Delhi Postal REGD No DL-11037/97
Licence No U-(C)-20/97 Licensed to Post without Prepayment Regd with Registrar of Newspapers of India under No RN 7064/62

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Mainstream

VOL XXXV No 47 November 1,1997 Rs 7

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

President's Moral Standing

K.S. DUGGAL

Indo-Pak Dialogue : Building Bridges of Understanding

ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER

Globalisation, Democracy and Threat to Diversity

RANDHIR SINGH

End of a National Project : An Argument

B.P. SINGH

Role of History in Understanding of Society

"EDINBURGH CHOGM IN RETROSPECT : RETRIEVING INDIA'S PROMINENT PLACE IN THIRD WORLD" BY SUMIT CHAKRAVARTTY

Subverting Democracy

While the President of India averted a real constitutional crisis through his timely intervention by calling for a review of the Union Cabinet's recommendation for imposition of President's Rule in UP and in the process safeguarded democracy, the happenings in the State continue to be matter of serious concern

For one thing, the State Governor, Romesh Bhandari, acted with least impartiality in the UP developments Instead he demonstrated rank partisanship being hand-in-glove with the Defence Minister and SP supremo, Mulayam Singh Yadav, so as to prevent the Kalyan Singh Government to survive without the BSP's support This was the position of Congress President Sitaram Kesri as well Although in the CPI-M Harkishan Singh Surjeet backed this strategy in Mulayam's company, there is evidence to suggest Jyoti Basu's strong opposition to the move basing himself on the principled stand adopted by the Union Home Minister and CPI stalwart, Indrajit Gupta For having behaved in a thoroughly unconstitutional manner Romesh Bhandari brought the institution of the Governor itself into disrepute His continuence in the post is bound to cause considerable damage to both democracy and the Constitution

At the other end of the spectrum Chief Minister Kalyan Singh has not covered himself with glory after winning the confidence vote in the State Assembly He may claim, on the lines of what the Assembly Speaker had stated, that those who backed him from the Congress and the BSP do not come under the anti-defection law, but by offering most of them ministerial births Kalyan Singh has in effect made a mokery of the Anti-Defection Act, and this would bring no credit to his party In this setting the BJP has been exposed to the accusation of being as unscrupulous as the other major political formations, and persons like Vajpayee and Advani would find it difficult to reject the charge off-hand For our public is discerning enough to see through the hollowness of the BJP's claim of being a 'party with a difference' in the aftermath of the developments in various States like UP and Gujarat

The fact is that among those who have been given the privilege of entering the Kalyan Singh Ministry (which has now acquired a jumbo size) are persons with criminal records, and some even happen to be "history-sheeters" How on earth can the CM provide good governance in the company of such personalities? How then can his government be distinguished from the previous administrations functioning under Mayawati and Mulayam? These are questions which the BJP leaders cannot evade

Obviously the atmosphere of UP has been polluted once again by Kalyan Singh's recourse to such a course He has no time to ponder over the blow to democracy inflicted by such a step The complicity of the central party leadership in this move is also a serious matter as it too is seeking to subvert democracy in the State soon after it was safeguarded through K R Narayanan's principled move to defend to Constitution The BJP will have to pay dearly for this step in the near future

October 28 S C

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EDINBURGH CHOGM IN RETROSPECT

Retrieving India's prominent place in Third World

SUMIT CHAKRAVARTTY

When I K Gujral finally boarded the plane in the evening of Thursday (October 23, 1997) for his fourth major visit abroad as the Prime Minister, one had not expected much from his participation at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Edinburgh, Scotland's capital city, even though his was to be the keynote address at the inaugural ceremony of the Commonwealth Summit on October 24 In fact his selection as the keynote speaker at the Summit—a tribute to both India and its PM on the golden jubilee of its independence—was the most compelling reason why this visit could not be called off (as his scheduled trips to Germany and France which were cancelled at the last moment due to the serious developments in UP) And this despite the not-so-unjustified criticism against the Prime Minister undertaking this trip so soon after the crisis in UP had come to an end exposing in the process not merely the vulnerability of both the United Front and the head of its government at the Centre but also their severe shortcomings

Nevertheless, our past experience with the Commonwealth did not inspire hope of the CHOGM yielding anything substantive, durable or lasting That is why the high point of the visit appeared to be the bilateral meeting Gujral was to have with his Pakistani counterpart, Nawaz Sharif, outside the Commonwealth gathering And there was a faint glimmer of expectation that this summit meeting of the two largest neighbours in South Asia would help to break the deadlock over the methodology to be followed for discussing the Kashmir problem so essential for the smooth conduct of the Indo-Pak dialogue at the level of the two countries' Foreign Secretaries in the days ahead

◆

BUT what eventually happened in the CHOGM took quite a few observers, including this journalist (who accompanied Gujral in his trip to the UK but had limited experience of covering Commonwealth Summits) by a pleasant surprise Apart from the significant role that India played in trying to shape the contours of the Commonwealth's evolution in the near future (that is, the next century), what struck one was the change the Commonwealth was in the process of undergoing close on the heels of the public insistence on the transformation of the British royalty in the wake of Princess Diana's untimely and tragic demise in the Paris tunnel accident

Thus the British Prime Minister Tony Blair, with his youthful vigour and verve, tried to present and market at the CHOGM opening function a new-look Britain, call it the Britain of the coming century His speech provided a measure of the refreshing change he was seeking to bring about, albeit rhetorically, but even the words did carry a 'new' approach and attitude whatever their value—a far cry from the ideological rigidity of Margaret Thatcher, and to a lesser extent her predecessor whose commitment to the Commonwealth principles was far less than that of the present head of the Labour Government Following what *The Times* aptly described as "an extraordinary video and music and dance display in which even the national anthem had a jazzy twang" (shades of Rehman's musical tribute to the golden jubilee of our independence at Vijay Chowk, New Delhi before the midnight of August 14 this year?) leaving the Queen and national leaders "bemused", Tony Blair said with his characteristic eloquent flourish

> As you have just seen, this is a time of renewal and redefinition For Britain and, I believe, also for the Commonwealth
>
> You are here today in a new Britain There is a new British identity modern, enterprising, outward, open and compassionate Our goal to combine a highly creative modern economy, able to compete with all corners in the global market, with a decent, one-nation society, a country for all the people, not a privileged few A Britain in which we cherish and value the creativity and talent of those from all nations, all societies and all religions—particularly those

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> from other Commonwealth countries
>
> The perceptions of Britain are changing too I cherish the ties of history, sentiment and culture that hold us together But this doesn't define Britain for me or my generation I want people like you to admire Britain for what we are, not what we've been
>
> And we know that today, as we approach the twentyfirst century, we in Britain will succeed as a country on our merits or not at all The Britain of the elite is over That is why first-class education for all is the new government's number one priority
>
> The new Britain is a meritocracy where we break down the barriers of class, religion, race and culture

And he drew the contrast with his predecessors by underlining

> I am a passionate believer in the Commonwealth Before the election I wrote an article promising that " a Labour Government would make a sustained effort to give new life to the Commonwealth and to Britain's role within it " I was much derided at the time by our opponents I was told I didn't understand the reality of the Commonwealth and its limitations
>
> But here is the reality of the Commonwealth It covers a quarter of the globe 1 7 billion people live within it One in four young people under the age of 25 are in the Commonwealth countries Its reach is astonishing
>
> The Commonwealth's historical achievements are impressive, not least in World War II where we joined arms to save the world from fascism
>
> That is the reality

The sign of the changing times was available not only from Tony Blair's speech For the first time Queen Elizabeth II, the British monarch, joined the heads of government/state at the opening ceremony and, what is more, addressed them For the first time the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Nigeria's Chief Emeka Anyaoku, described the British monarch as the Commonwealth head "at the moment", thereby fuelling speculation, as in *The Daily Telegraph,* that the status of the Commonwealth head may not automatically go to the British Queen or King (in case of the assumption to the highest office in England of the Prince of Wales, Charles)

But that was not all The Queen herself pointed to the change—brought about by the organisation's progressive growth (today with the return of Fiji to its fold the Commonwealth has 54 members)—in her speech at the CHOGM opening

> It is 20 years since Commonwealth leaders last met in the United Kingdom, a far cry from the early years of my reign, when Prime Ministers met only in London This change has emphasised that the Commonwealth has no centre and no periphery
>
> the Commonwealth has grown, with Fiji's return bringing our numbers to 54 It is one of the largest and most respected organisations of peoples in the world I am fortunate indeed to have witnessed its growth and changing face at first-hand, having visited so many of the member countries, and by being in frequent and close touch with individual heads of government

What amazed one beyond words was that the next sentence in the Queen's speech—"I have just returned from most enjoyable visits to Pakistan and India"—was greeted with roars of derisive laughter of disbelief by mainly British journalists at the CHOGM Media Centre (where the whole programme was shown live on TV as the press was banned from attending the ceremony) Here too was a change—the monarchy did not enjoy the wide prestige, honour and popularity as it did in the not-so-distant past

But no less surprising was the Queen's appreciative quotation from Jawaharlal Nehru's observation made in 1957 (making amends for having rubbed the Indian leaders on the wrong side during her trip to India?)

> What strikes me about the Commonwealth is not so much the points of likeness, which are many, of course—otherwise we would not be together—but rather the points of difference, which have not been allowed to come into the way of our meeting, conferring, consulting and cooperating with each other in a large measure And if that is good for the Commonwealth, it should be good for others also, and for the world at large.

This too was a new development indeed

◆

Prime Minister Gujral in his keynote speech also highlighted the changing reality of the Commonwealth by referring to the transformation of the British Commonwealth with India's entry in 1949 and the completion of the decolonisation process with South Africa's abolition of apartheid and its re-emergence as a multiracial democratic society in 1994, as well as the new task as it reaches a 'turning point' or the third phase of its evolution—"to forge a shared vision for the new millennium"

But more importantly, he spelt out certain basic truths in the context of the Edinburgh CHOGM's main theme of debate—"Trade, Investment and Development The Road to Commonwealth Prosperity". In Gujral's opinion,

> Many developing countries are being asked to adjust to this process of globalisation at a pace and in conditions that are not of their choosing Equal opportunity, and democracy, ideals which we all share, are often absent in the restricted chambers of the international economic system And yet, I have little doubt that, in the long run, *globalisation will succeed only if it is equitable and just,* and is so seen by the vast majority of mankind
>
> The developing countries of today will become the high growth economic frontiers of tomorrow If today they are not provided *better terms of trade and market access, and greater resources for their critical developmental needs,* the consequences will adversely affect global prosperity tomorrow
>
> It is my conviction that the Commonwealth can and must be made an instrument of cooperation that has *direct relevance for vital issues of economic growth of developing*

President's Moral Standing

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

The stature of the President of India in the public eye has undoubtedly gone up with his thoughtful counsel to the Union Cabinet to desist from its adventurist line of dismissing the UP Ministry and to bring the State under President's Rule He has questioned the decision of the Cabinet and advised them to think over, which they have done and acceded to desist from defying the President's wise advice

Overnight there has been a definite wave of support for President Naraynan's wisdom Not that the President was partial to the party assailed in UP but he went strictly by law and the Constitution to decide on advising the Cabinet to reconsider its decision—the first ever that has come from the head of the state to the Council of Ministers at the Centre The historic importance which lies in President K R Narayanan's advice touched most of the members of the Cabinet and hence their decision to yield to the wisdom that has come from the Rashtrapati Bhavan

Almost in a flash a new situation could be discernible For long, there was a slump in the public morale as political leaders were being regarded as mostly unworthy to lead this great nation They might have been endowed with all the trappings of high office, but they have failed to command the confidence of the public that they would on their own be able to lift the system

It is precisely at that very crucial moment has come President Narayanan's call which at once has lifted up a sordid situation into something noble and dispassionate Not that he has given vent to his emotions alone, but have demonstrated from the past archives the shortcomings in the stand of the Union Cabinet It is precisely on this point that he has echoed the mood and sentiments of the common people that constitutional decisions of the past need not be flouted but honoured By this, he has not only demonstrated his personal fidelity to uprightness, but could advise with moral authority the Ministers at the Centre and persuade them from taking a wrong decision on a very crucial issue

The touch of moral authority in public life that the President of India has shown has earned him the encomium of millions Thereby shall be silenced the cacophony of those who have taken politics as the battle-ground for settling scores without bothering about its moral repercussions in the wider national field What President K R Narayanan has demonstrated is that even one voice in defence of morality can overcome the mean calculations of those many who may be entrenched today in the circle of power His unostentatious appearance while at the same time upholding moral strength has won the respect and admiration of millions

Here lies the hope for tomorrow This may show the way for a unifying presence to solve the problem that beset this nation What President K R Narayanan has done is to rekindle the hope that everything is not lost with the ugly cesspool all around ■

(By arrangement with *The Hindu*)

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member countries The Commonwealth **can and must** become an *effective interlocutor between the North and the South* The Commonwealth **can and must** strive for *greater democracy and equity in global economic decision-making* The Commonwealth **can and must** ensure that *all its members share the benefits of technology*

It is on the basis of these words that India ffectively intervened in the discussion on the conomic Declaration upholding the developing ountries' interests and perspectives

Incidentally the Commonwealth Secretary-eneral's speech at the opening ceremony—wherein he noted that the entry of the "great countries" of India and Pakistan into the organisation marked the beginning of the modern Commonwealth, and felicitated the two governments and peoples on the fiftieth anniversary of their independence—echoed the view that while globalisation was a "blessing" for "some" states, for "many countries" it "has meant further marginalisation" and that "an international underclass which globalisation has created has emerged to complement the underclasses within nations" Chief Emeka Anyaoku further pointed out

> The world cannot continue into the new millennium part affluent and part poor, especially if the poor grow ever poorer The disparities in wealth between different sections of mankind have never been wider and the potential threat they pose to world peace and security is bound to grow It will be part of the business of this Meeting to alert the international community to the dangers inherent in this drift

◆

THUS the final Economic Declaration rejected the moves by the developed countries to call for a new round of multilateral trade negotiations in the WTO

This was possible mainly through effective interventions on the part of India with Gujral taking a forthright stand in the matter by pointing to the developing world's persisting difficulty in assimilating the results of the Uruguay Round itself that had led to "some indigestion" The developed countries were keen to extract more concessions from the South on such issues as services where their expectations from the Uruguay Round were far from satisfactory So it was natural for these states to openly criticise India for having "blocked progress on trade liberalisation" which in itself was a token of the Indian contribution in successfully conveying the developing countries' concerns into the declaration No wonder many representatives of the Third World, those of the small and medium-sized countries in particular, unequivocally acclaimed India for such a step which regrettably was missing in the past, that is, especially in the final stages of the Uruguay Round when New Delhi had meekly succumbed to Western, mainly US, blandishments This was one of the finest manifestations of the "welcome departure from the past" that this CHOGM signified, to borrow the words of an Indian official

The document itself conveyed the views that (a) "not all countries have benefitted equally from the globalisation of the world economy and a significant number of them are threatened with marginalisation", (b) "globalisation needs to be carefully managed to meet the risks inherent in the process", (c) "special measures" are needed to correct the prevailing "conditions of deep poverty and growing inequality" endangering "world peace, security and social stability", and to "help the integration of countries, especially the small states and LDCs, in the global economy and address the uneven development that threatens many countries" In fact Britain's and Tony Blair's passion for "free-trade" was considerably tempered in the final document that emerged Thus the idea that "commitment to market principles, openness to international trade and investment, development of human and physical resources, gender equality and good governance and political stability" were not accepted as central to or the essential prerequisite (as had been suggested in the original draft) but "major components of economic and social progress"

In the field of trade the CHOGM participants "resolved to oppose the introduction of new non-tariff barriers and the use of unilateral actions and bilateral pressures which run counter to the spirit of the WTO"—the words alluding to the use of unilateral trade sanctions under Article 301, implying thereby an indirect criticism of the US (which too bore the imprint of some Indian input)

Likewise in the sphere of environment the developed world's attempts to burden developing countries like China, India and Brazil with fresh responsibilities before the Kyoto Conference of Partie to the UN Convention of Climate Change wa stalled primarily due to Indian opposition (as Nev Delhi was well aware of the US refusal to an serious commitment for reducing greenhous emissions although Washington bears the majo responsibility for such emissions)

However, the document did mention that

> after Kyoto all countries will need to play their part i pursuing policies that would result in significant reduction of greenhouse gas emissions if we are to solve a glob problem that affects us all

Interestingly, whatever be their contentiou approaches to issues like Kashmir that get wid publicity in the media, India and Pakistan adop similar, if not identical, positions on several question of defending their economic interests, as for example market access (which barely finds space in th press) The Edinburgh Summit too experienced thi convergence of the policy perspectives of New Delh and Islamabad, something indeed heartening for a those cherishing closer cooperation and friendsh between the two neighbouring states

◆

As for the CHOGM's political declaration, th document in its final shape maintained th suspension of Nigeria (carried out at the Aucklan Summit in November 1995) for its human right abuses but rejected the human rights groups' deman for its expulsion Instead the Commonwealt Ministerial Action Group monitoring the huma rights violations was empowered with a wide mandate to address "serious and persiste violations" of the Harare Commonwealth Declaratio (October 1991) as well as supervise the country

(Continued on page 3

INDO-PAK DIALOGUE

Building Bridges of Understanding

K S DUGGAL

It is accepted in all quarters that there is no end to goodwill between the people of India and the people of Pakistan though it has hardly obtained even for a day between the Government of India and the Government of Pakistan ever since independence came to the subcontinent. As for the peoples, it is as it should be. There are ever so many families which have been torn apart by the stern realities of the partition, parents and children, brothers and sisters, close friends and long-time neighbours have been distanced albeit they continue to be bound by the silken ties of affection and soulful fund of sustained sentiments. Whatever be the logic of the two-nation theory, coexistence between the Hindus and Muslims has been the central feature of our way of life for more than 500 years. Sufis like Baba Farid and Hazrat Chishti, Bhaktas like Kabir and Guru Nanak have ingrained it in our psyche. During a recent visit to Pakistan attending the wedding of a friend's son, I was heartened to hear the ladies sing:

Why do you stand under the Chandan tree, daughter?
I await for my father to tell him,
It's time to look for a match.
What type of a match would you like, my daughter?
One like the moon in the stars,
And Krishna Kanhaiya among the gods.

A Radcliffe can draw a line on the map and divide the land, but how can anyone divide Waris and Bulleh Shah?

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As it is, after having fought three infructuous wars, Kashmir remains a running sore. While it is a hard reality that no government in Pakistan can remain in saddle if it does not advance its claim over it, it is also true that no government in India can survive which relinquishes claim over it. It is the political necessity of both India and Pakistan to keep the issue burning red hot and drain the scarce resources of the famished millions on subversion and security, apart from the innocent blood with which the hands of both the governments are smeared.

The author, a noted Punjabi writer recently nominated to the Rajya Sabha, is the President, Punjabi Writers Meet.

My reckoning is that where the governments have failed, the peoples will succeed if they lend their hand. They would, at least, not allow the situation to worsen any further.

What is needed most urgently is that we build bridges of understanding, revive the old ties, renew the commonality of interests and nourish together the dreams we cherish. A beginning, I suppose, could be made with the languages spoken in common on both sides of the border. It is a truism that language has a mighty hold over the people. Stronger than that of religion. We witnessed it the other day when Bangladesh parted company with Pakistan. We have three languages—Urdu, Punjabi and Sindhi—that our peoples share even if we keep Kashmiri and Dogri apart for the time being.

The anomaly of it stared hard in the eyes at the time of partition. Urdu was declared the official language of Pakistan when it was the mother-tongue of none other than the Mohajirs evacuated from India. They have Punjabi in West Punjab, Sindhi in Sindh, Pashtu in the North-West Frontier Province and Balochi in Balochistan. In pursuit of their policy of divide and rule, the Britishers had the Muslims in these parts believe that their language is Urdu. Temperamentally volatile and impetuous, the Punjabis took to Urdu most enthusiastically. They produced poets of the eminence of Iqbal and Faiz, fiction writers like Saadat Hasan Manto and Ahmed Nadim Qasmi, playwrights of the calibre of Syed Imtiaz Ali Taj and Rafi Peer. They would have nothing to do with Punjabi, their mother-tongue, which was abandoned to be taken care of by the non-Muslims, primarily the Sikhs. However, not long after the creation of Pakistan, the Punjabis in West Punjab realised that their salvation lay with their mother-tongue. They had to carry along with them the teeming millions in the countryside who had little to do with Urdu. They realised how handicapped they were on account of their alienation from Punjabi.

A highly meaningful incident narrated to me by Maulana Abdul Majid Salik, the renowned Urdu litterateur and editor of a leading Urdu daily issued from Lahore, will illustrate my assertion. The Maulana was travelling in a local bus to Muslim

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Town in Lahore where he lived Finding that the conductor had missed issuing him the ticket, he shouted *"Bhaiya tum mujhe ticket deni bhool gaye"* (Brother, you have forgotten to issue me the ticket) The conductor who was a Mohajir from UP chuckled and correcting the Maulana contemptuously said *"Ticket deni nahin, ticket dena hota hai"* As it happens ticket is masculine in Urdu and feminine in Punjabi Maulana, an old friend, told me that he realised the importance of the mother-tongue and decided that very moment that he would do his creative writing in Punjabi alone in future He started a magazine called *Panj Darya* to start with and was preparing for a daily in Punjabi when he passed away

The enthusiasm for Punjabi in West Punjab today is heart-warming As if to make up for their earlier neglect, almost all the Punjabis who earlier wrote in Urdu and had earned considerable fame, are found trying their hand at writing in Punjabi Faiz Ahmed 'Faiz' wrote a number of poems in Punjabi which he would recite to us with unusual pride Some of their popular journals in Punjabi are *Panj Darya, Maan Boli* and *Lehran* They have Punjabi as a subject for post-graduate studies upto MA in the Punjab University Their radio and TV programmes reverbrate with Punjabi broadcasts day and night and these are highly popular in East Punjab And what sweet Punjabi they speak in every day use! Their idiom is simple and down-to-earth

Punjabi, to my mind, has untold possibilities of bringing the two parts of the Punjab together and live like fond neighbours If this can be achieved, the sway that the Punjabis in Pakistan have on the collective sensibility of their people, can go a long way in alleviating suspicions, removing misunderstandings and fostering amity

As it is West Punjab employs the Persian script while we in India have adopted the Gurmukhi script for Punjabi Since in India we have consistently pursued writing in Punjabi all these days, we have a highly developed and rich output of Punjabi literature in all the genres, whether it is poetry, drama, fiction or prose of ideas Having taken to writing in Punjabi more seriously only recently, Punjabi writing across the border is not as rich in output but nourished on the many-splendoured Perso-Arabic tradition, it has a flavour of its own Both sides can benefit one another enormously if the outstanding publications in the Gurmukhi script on this side of the border can be rendered into the Persian script and exchanged with Punjabi writings in Pakistan transliterated into the Gurmukhi script for us The task could be entrusted to the universities or literary academies on both sides of the border, perhaps under the auspices of SAARC This should go a long way not only in enriching Punjabi literature as a whole, but also in fostering better understanding between us on both sides of the border, bringing us closer and enabling us to appreciate better each other's psychosis as it waxes and wanes

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I remember, way back in 1948 'Faiz' who was visiting India to participate in Mahatma Gandhi's funeral as the editor of his paper, broke his journey while on his way back at Jalandhar where I happened to be posted Sitting together, old friends, we could realise what was in store for us Pragmatic as ever as he was, 'Faiz' suggested

> Why can't you celebrate Waris Shah's birthday on this side of the border and we come to participate in it and we observe Shahid Bhagat Singh's martyrdom and you join us?

How I wish we had listened to the bard! Maybe we would not have come to this pass But it is never too late We can make a beginning now Similar occasions can be multiplied Rather than confining ourselves to the people visiting places of pilgrimage across the border, which certainly has its own importance, we should cultivate cultural, literary and artistic exchanges as frequently as we can persuade our governments to permit

While we do have a Pakistan-India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy in Delhi, it needs to be activised a lot more We should have similar societies in other metropolitan towns as well And why not in Aligarh, Hyderabad, Chandigarh and Lucknow too?

There is no dearth of ideas What is needed is that a beginning should be made And there is no better time than today with Inder Kumar Gujral, the most enlightened Punjabi in the saddle in India, and Nawaz Sharif with his massive mandate in Pakistan ■

Globalisation, Democracy and Threat to Diversity

ASGHAR ALI ENGINEER

Every country in the so-called Third World is facing the threat of cultural homogenisation from the process of globalisation Though the process, in a sense, began with the colonisation of the Afro-Asian countries, the threat was more acutely felt in the post-Second World War period than before During the colonisation period too a number of protest movements against the Western cultural hegemonism were launched but the urge for independence from the colonial masters dominated over everything else It was felt that once the country was liberated, the colonial culture will also fade away and the native culture will become hegemonic once again

But this expectation was not fulfilled and the colonial culture continued to rule over the native culture The ruling elite were generally immersed in the colonial culture and the governmental institutions too were shaped accordingly The native institutions, language and culture were generally looked down upon and shunned by the ruling elite The colonial language also enjoyed supremacy French in the former French colonies and English in the former British or American colonies became the languages of central administration

However, the resentment did not build up soon after independence It took several decades before the reaction set in In the beginning the reaction was also cautious or in the form of debate But later it acquired more strident tones and gradually erupted in violence The former colonial countries began to be liberated soon after the Second World War India was the first major country to become independent in 1947 Many other countries followed suit Many African countries got independence in the early sixties Algeria in Western Africa was liberated in the early sixties

One more factor needs to be noted here and this is very crucial All countries which were liberated from the colonial clutches did not go the democratic way India, the biggest among them, got indepen-

The author is the Chairman, Centre for the Study of Society and Secularism, Mumbai dence through a democratic struggle and, therefore, found it easy to remain democratic even after independence But many Afro-Asian countries which were directly or indirectly under colonial control, developed authoritarian power structures soon after independence Algeria and several other Afro-Asian countries offer a vivid example

While the reaction against the colonial-Western culture was more democratic in democratic countries, it tended to be violent in authoritarian countries This was because the dictatorial rulers themselves were highly Westernised and did not permit any opposition to Western culture and administrative institutions The opposition assumed violent form, particularly when the economic going was not too good In democratic countries like India there was sufficient scope for democratic opposition, and, therefore, it had hardly any need for violent expressions

The second crucial factor, as hinted above, was economic in nature Despite the hegemony of Western culture and institutions in the post-independence period, much opposition did not develop as long as the economic going was good However, when the economic conditions deteriorated, poverty and unemployment increased, and the ruling elite did not allow any democratic opposition, violence broke out

Also, much depended on the native conditions and sociological institutions The protest exploited the religious discourse, if no alternative social or political discourse was available For example, in the Islamic countries like Algeria and Iran, neither was there democracy nor any alternative non-religious discourse, native in nature, available The protesters, per force, had to adopt a strongly religious discourse Moreover, this religious discourse had a great deal of mobilising capacity and a very large social space The opponents felt that the corrupt Westernised elite is responsible for the deteriorating moral atmosphere and economic situation as they have no regard for religion and religious institutions If they had enforced the religious teachings and the Shari'ah provisions strictly and rigorously, such deterioration would not have taken place Thus what we call Islamic fundamentalism is the product of the given circumstances in certain Islamic countries We will throw some more light on this a little later

Often the geographical boundaries of the liberated countries embraced several linguistic and cultural groups The colonial powers went on uniting different cultural and linguistic units for administrative purposes Thus many disparate units came under one colonial power The ruling elites of the independent countries took over what was an administrative rather than a political unit, and insisted on retaining it as it is and tried to create a nation-state out of it This resulted in many complex problems and even led to violent movements Thus these nation-states in the Third World countries came to be bewilderingly diverse And diversity is both an opportunity as well as a challenge, a strength as well as a weakness

The Western countries, on the other hand, are often mono-cultural and mono-linguistic (with certain exceptions, of course) though increased migration from the former colonised countries is fast changing the linguo-cultural scene in the metropolitan countries The United States of America, in order to retain its cultural uniformity, had followed—with a sense of pride—what it called the melting-pot model The various identities derived from the European countries melted into one culturally uniform American identity However, now that culturally diverse Afro-Asian groups are migrating to America, its melting-pot model has become irrelevant and the Afro-Asian multi-cultural or mosaic model has acquired acceptability Thus even Western countries are no more mono-cultural or mono-linguistic though, of course, their own culture remains predominant

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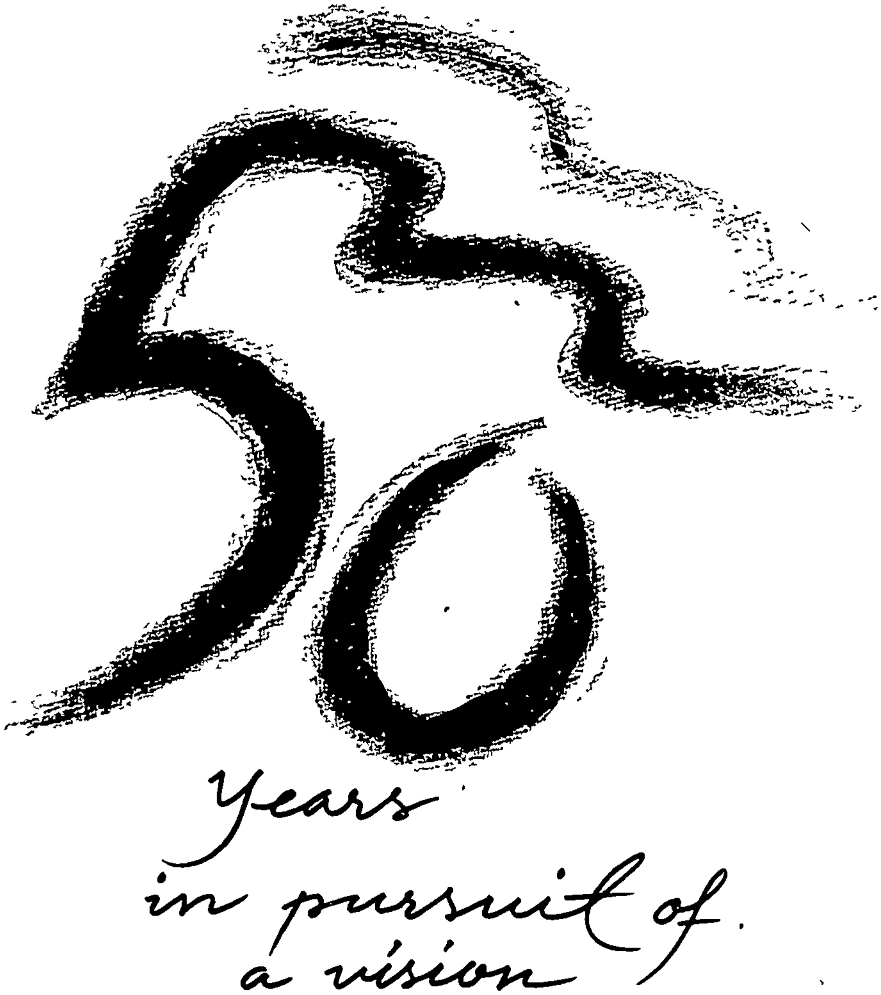
It is necessary to throw light on these aspects if we have to understand the impact of globalisation on the Third World countries in general and the Islamic countries in particular As pointed out above, the process of Western acculturation began with colonisation itself but the term globalisation was never used This term came to be used recently There is good reason for this Earlier, during the colonial days, the native country was culturally mainly influenced by its own metropolitan country, say, Britain, Germany, Holland, Italy or France But now the cultural or political influences are not restricted to any one metropolitan country The TV, the Internet, the satellite have demolished all cultural boundaries and brought the whole globe under its cultural network And hence the term globalisation

But, in a way, the term 'globalisation' is certainly misleading There is hardly any true interaction between cultures of different countries which are part of this globe It is Western, particularly North American culture, which is hegemonic and dominant It has become, in a way, what is being termed as



It was vision that made our freedom possible Then began a journey to fulfill that vision It's been uphill, all the way But we carried on And progressed Today, we can look back at the journey we've completed with pride And at the one ahead with hope

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a global culture All other cultures are termed as 'ethnic' something which was termed, during the colonial days, as 'native' The term 'ethnic', like the term 'native', carries a sense of backwardness and something, though not contemptible, not in keeping with the acceptable trend too Thus, for all practical purposes, what is termed as 'globalisation' is, in effect, Westernisation or, to be more precise, Americanisation

One more development took place in the early nineties, that is, the total collapse of communist rule in the former Soviet Union The world, which was bipolar, suddenly became unipolar and the American hegemony became supreme This development was quite momentous in more than one sense The term globalisation is also a post-Soviet phenomenon It changed the very intellectual comprehension of world politics, apart from the global power-equations Some termed it as the 'end of history' while others termed the post-Soviet era as that of 'clash of civilisations' It is interesting to note that both the articles —the one on the end of history and the other on clash of civilisations—were written by those who shape American foreign policy

Prof Huntington's theory of clash of civilisations generated a great deal of debate, specially in the Islamic world Prof Huntington theorised that after the collapse of the communist bloc, the forthcoming clash would be with the Islamic civilisation Though on close scrutiny Huntington's proposition is found to be quite facile and simplistic, it gained a great deal of currency through the Western dominated media According to Huntington, when the world was bipolar (that is, divided between the USA and USSR) what was important was which side you are on but now that the world was unipolar what is important is 'what are you', that is, what is your identity—Western, Chinese, African or Islamic According to him, there is a basic clash between these identities

Earlier it was important to know what your political alignments are and now it is important to know which civilisation you belong to In other words, what is your identity? In fact in the Greek philosophy, Socrates laid emphasis on knowing oneself And in the Eastern philosophies too, particularly in the Sufi Islamic tradition, the basic emphasis is on knowing oneself ("one who could know oneself, would know the entire universe") In Afro-Asian countries the emphasis has always been on self-identity What Prof Huntington wrote was no new discovery But since Huntington is a Western scholar, an expert on international law, he did not know the Eastern thought intimately enough For him to lay emphasis on self-identity is a post-Soviet phenomenon

Also, for Prof Huntington, the hegemonic civilisation is the Western civilisation and this hegemonic civilisation perceives a threat from the Islamic and Chinese civilisations Any challenge to the Western civilisation is a threat and he terms it a 'clash' What is not Western is a threat It is this arrogance of power which is highly problematic and evokes strong reaction from the Islamic world The threat can go only when the Western civilisation and its hegemony is accepted and one's own civilisational identity is wiped out One's ethnicity is tolerable but not one's civilisation The process of globalisation can be complete only and only when Western civilisation completely triumphs over all other civilisations No civilisation should challenge it The Soviet bloc had posed a political threat to America And it is not so difficult to meet a military threat but it is very difficult, almost impossible, to meet the civilisational challenge

Thus what the West terms as globalisation is in effect total, or at least, near denial of civilisational and cultural diversity Though the Western scholars are talking of pluralism in the post-modern world, they are not inclined to accept non-Western cultures as their equals Like pluralism the term globalisation is also post-modern Hence what was accepted with one hand (that is, pluralism) is being taken away with the other (that is, through globalisation) The West can hardly come to terms with the cultural and civilisational diversity

This cultural homogenisation as a result of globalisation is creating strong reactions in many societies The reactions are, of course, varied in terms of intensity and direction The more traditional and politically authoritarian a society is, the greater is the intensity of reaction against global homogenisation Algeria, Egypt and Iran are obvious examples We will deal with the situation in these countries briefly

One should also remember that there are some factors which accelerate the process of this reaction deterioration in economic conditions and the failure of the ruling elite to solve acute economic problems Also, when the ruling elite charters the course of economic liberalisation which itself is an economic dimension of globalisation, it further aggravates the problem In fact the economic factor, more often than not, turns out to be a key factor The second important factor in this connection is consumerism and blind greed for accumulation by the ruling elite

It results in immiserisation of the masses on the one hand, and limitless accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few all-powerful multinationals on the other

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IF we examine the cases of Iran, Algeria and Egypt among the Muslim countries, these factors turn out to be very crucial Let us take the example of Iran first Iran was politically an authoritarian society smarting under the rule of the Shah before the Islamic Revolution of 1979 The Shah was not allowing any democratic space for protest and ruthlessly suppressed those who opposed him His economic policies were totally pro-West which resulted in hyper-inflation on the one hand, and increasing unemployment on the other His land-reform policy proved to be no less disastrous The surplus land was turned over to the multinational agro-business rather than to the small peasant The peasantry thrown out from the land found itself in the slums of south Teheran in search of petty jobs Over and above this, it also found itself afflicted by hyper-inflation All these factors combined to arouse his wrath

But these factors by themselves would not have caused the great social upheaval Iran went through had not the Shah pursued what he termed as 'white revolution' The so-called white revolution was nothing but unrestricted Westernisation imposed from above on basically a feudal, traditional society These policies created a Westernised upper middle class which broke all traditions and ignored all traditional values Usually the Westernised elite indulges in consumerism and believes in hedonism Their life-style is devoid of all values and is a mere pursuit of this-worldly enjoyment

Also, in a traditional society like Iran, the Shah took on a section of the clergy The land reform deprived it of its income All these factors combined to engender an explosive situation The traditional merchant class also suffered in various ways, particularly because of the pro-Western economic policies of the Shah The Shah's economic policies favoured the new economic elite depending on export-import related business The Bazar merchants (the traditional mercantile class) became the support-base of the clergy led by Ayatollah Khomeini Khomeini laid stress on Islamic values and made out a case that Westernisation has resulted in utter material corruption and destruction of the traditional Iranian culture It was Western culture which had become hegemonic marginalising the Iranian culture and values

This had tremendous appeal for the bazar elements on the one hand, and the immiserised masses of the south Teheran slums on the other The economic misery on the one side and the highly Westernised life-style of the upper class elite, totally neglectful of Iranian cultural values, on the other, was the ideal situation for the Islamic Revolution whose dynamo happened to be the bazar elements and the poorer masses of the Teheran slums

The Islamic intellectuals like Ali Shari'ati and Ayatollah Taleqani also played a very important role in arousing Islamic pride among the educated middle-class Iranians Ali Shari'ati was himself a highly educated intellectual He was the product of Sorborne in Paris He re-interpreted Islam in keeping with the then prevailing Iranian situation He inspired a large number of educated youths and his meetings in the Huseiniyeh mosque in Teheran were attended by thousands of people He created a sense of Islamic pride in them and mentally prepared them for the Islamic Revolution

Ayatollah Taleqani, unlike Ayatollah Khomeini, was not conservative He had an open mind and was quite accommodative of modern developments He emphasised the redistribution of wealth among the weaker sections of the Iranian society and his Islamic discourse also made people proud of their Islamic identity It was quite natural that when Westernisation led to de-emphasis on the Islamic identity, the Islamic discourse of Ayatollahs as well as that of the modern educated Islamic scholars like Ali Shari'ati restored pride in the Islamic identity It was as a result of this that many women whose mothers had taken to mini-skirts under the influence of the Shah's white revolution, took to the Islamic *chador* It is interesting to note that the *chador* itself was much more than an Islamic veil it was, above all, a proclamation of one's pride in the Islamic identity But in the post-Islamic Revolution period the *chador* became an oppressive instrument in the hands of *pasdarans* that is, the Islamic guards The significance of *chador* changed with the changing situation

In this connection it is important to note that much depends on who monopolises and manipulates the religious symbols Unfortunately both Ali Shari'ati and Ayatollah Taleqani did not survive long Ali Shari'ati was probably eliminated by the SAWAK, the Shah's notorious secret intelligence service, and Ayatollah Taleqani, though he apparently died a natural death, was also probably a victim of Ayatollah

Khomeini's displeasure If Ayatollah Taleqani and Ali Shari'ati had lived longer and been free to inspire the masses of Iran, the Islamic Revolution could have taken a different turn However, this is just a conjecture History takes its concrete course not just by 'ifs' and 'buts' but by the actors and events which appear on its stage

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THE case of Algeria is equally interesting, though somewhat different The military-controlled ruling elite in Algeria were also under the influence of the West There too no democratic space was available as Algeria was ruled, since its liberation from France, by the military Generals The socialist discourse too did not help as the economic situation remained stagnant Thirty years after the anti-colonial revolution, Islamic militancy broke out The Islamic Front which had won the elections was not allowed, by the military dictatorship, to assume power Most of the militants came from the lower middle or poorer classes Their anger and frustration against the system assumed a violent form The military rule was essentially a liberal secular rule but it could not deliver Algeria from the economic mess 'The rising unemployment and inflation ultimately led to Islamic militancy The frustrated youth thinks that the economic and other ills can be removed if Islamic Shari'ah is truthfully implemented The failure on the economic front is automatically ascribed by them to the adoption of Western secular policies and they think that Islamisation would lead to their much-sought-after deliverance from all problems And to bring about Islamisation they resort to indiscriminate violence and go on killing innocent people

Both the Iranian and Algerian case studies show that the two factors mentioned above, that is, authoritarianism and failure on the economic front lead to an explosive situation and the revolt against the system derives its legitimation from Islamic sources American rulers often back dictatorial and authoritarian regimes in the Third World and force on them economic policies which benefit American or Western multinationals on the one hand, and the native ruling elite on the other It brings nothing but misery for the poorer masses and lower middle classes Thus religious fundamentalism basically breeds among these sections of urban society

Religious fundamentalism is basically an urban phenomenon Be it Iran, Algeria, Egypt, India or any other country for that matter, fundamentalist extremism breaks out in the urban areas There are good reasons for that The rural society in the Third World countries is generally a traditional society, well-rooted and integrated in traditional culture and religious values The rural society hardly feels alienated from traditional values Also, unlike the urban society life is simpler and away from unrestrained consumerism The percentage of those with modern education is also not very high and hence the lower incidence of educated unemployment The impact of globalisation on rural areas is also comparatively much less

Religious fundamentalism can and does breed in democratic societies also But its intensity may differ and its impact is more diffused as there is a democratic space for protest Fundamentalism has both a religious as well as a political dimension The impact of globalisation and Westernisation, which results in bulldozing the local religious identities, evokes a strong urge for re-emphasising and re-asserting religious values It leads to religious revivalism And, establishment of a secular polity in a traditional society leads to an urge for re-imposition of the rule based on the Shari'ah or *dharma shastras* With this view a political movement is launched by the traditional religious elite This is the political dimension of fundamentalism But in a democratic polity, protest movements have a much greater possibility of democratic expression and hence the lesser tendency for becoming violent though violence cannot be completely ruled out

However, even if violence breaks out it can be handled by the democratic rulers given the will Sometimes pressure from below may be immense and the democratically elected governments may lose their nerve It was witnessed in India both during the Shah Bano movement on the one hand, and the Ram Janmabhoomi movement on the other In a multi-religious society the majority-minority syndrome may claim much of the fundamentalist space This is precisely what happened during the Ram Janmabhoomi movement The whole movement was directed against the minority community The Ram Janmabhoomi movement had both a religious as well as a political dimension It did provoke a religious fervour among a large section of Hindus for building the Ram temple Since under the impact of modernisation and Westernisation the traditional values and identities were being undermined, the Ram Janmabhoomi movement could easily revive religious fervour

However, it had a strong political dimension also

(*Continued on page 26*)

Role of History in Understanding of Society

B P SINGH

The author, who is Secretary, Department of Culture, Ministry of Human Resource Development, (and has just been appointed the Home Secretary) delivered the following Prof K K Dutta Memorial Lecture at K P Jayaswal Research Institute (Patna, March 8, 1997)

I am grateful to my distinguished friend, Dr Chittaranjan Prasad Sinha, for inviting me to deliver Dr K K Dutta Memorial Lecture I accepted this honour and rare privilege largely on account of respect for the memories of Dr Kali Kinker Dutta—the great teacher and savant There are legendary tales of his compassion towards his students I was also a recipient of his kindness both as a student and a lecturer of Patna College and Post-Graduate Department of Political Science, Patna University I vividly recall that afternoon in 1964 when I went to bid him goodbye in his University Office subsequent to my appointment to the Indian Administrative Service Kali Babu requested me to accompany him to the beautiful Patna Museum complex where he had a separate office He was immaculately dressed in his *bandgala* and he instructed the driver to drive us very slowly Kali Babu was particular to ensure that his car did not overtake any other vehicle and I saw several of the fast-running vehicles, even some rickshaws, overtaking his small black car, the upholstry of which was of deep maroon colour He took me to his room, asked me several questions, gave me some parting advice and when I rose to take leave of him I could see his moistened eyes

As a historian, he had tremendous affection and regard for the people of Bihar and of this great country whom he portrayed with historical accuracy and humane judgement in his writings Kali Babu belonged to the genre of historians like Dr R C Majumdar, Dr H C Roychaudhury, Dr Altekar, and Dr Nilkantha Shastri He succeeded in presenting Indian history in its true perspective and made a deep impact on several generations of students of this country and continues to do so In his analysis history is not an account of the dead past but a basis for future The memory of a society needs to be preserved in a manner that it acts as a basis for the future

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In any exploration which seeks to dwell upon the relationship between History and Society it is necessary, in the first instance, to say a few words about what we mean by "History" and "Society" Like all concepts, the notion of history is by no means an easy notion to define At its simplest, history is concerned with the reconstruction of the past of an individual, or a community, or a nation It reconstructs this past in the form of a narrative which establishes inter-connections between different facets of what is being explored, at the same time as it seeks to dwell upon how the individual, or the community, or the nation, in question has changed over time

Each one of us, as an individual, has a memory of how one has grown over a period of time This memory that an individual stores in his psyche of his own life experiences is his history as an individual The moment I define history in this manner, it becomes clear that it is impossible for an individual to survive without a historical knowledge, or a historical understanding, of himself Can we, for a moment, imagine the psychological condition called 'amnesia'? As we all know, amnesia is a psychic state in which an individual completely loses his memory about his past The disorientation resulting from such a loss of memory can be awesome It results in a complete inability on the part of the individual to negotiate his way through his life What is true of an individual is also true of a society Just as an individual, to understand himself, and to negotiate his way through life, needs a memory of his life experiences, similarly a society or a nation—which is a collection of individuals—also needs a "memory" of its past and its life experiences This memory confers on the society or nation in question an understanding of itself, a sense of social and moral poise, and an ability to reflect meaningfully upon its future, and initiate action directed towards realising the future for which it aspires All this makes it clear how essential it is for an individual, or a society, or a nation, to have a historical understanding of himself/itself Such an understanding not only provides poise and a sense of direction to the individual, or the collectivity, but it also enables him to map out the future

It would be valid to take our inquiry into history, and its relationship with society, further by asking a few relevant questions which flow from the theme of today's lecture How is history written? Are there very many ways in which the past can be constructed, or is there a unique way in which it can and should be written? What is the relationship between history and ideology? And how does this relationship between history and ideology measure up to the notion of objective history, if objectivity is at all possible? Does history have any role to play in shaping the future of a society, and if so, what precise role does it play in this regard?

It is already clear to humanist scholars that history, or *ithasa* (as we define it in our own knowledge systems), is a discipline which constitutes a core element of the totality of understanding which individuals and societies have of themselves and of the world around them Taken in its wider sense, historical narratives were written very largely from memory from accounts, written or oral, handed down from generation to generation, and then reduced to a formal text by the custodians of historical scholarship It is in this wider sense that the great epics, which constitute the core of our culture, are also the *ithasa* of our society The Puranas constitute a similar corpus of knowledge in our literary heritage Both these bodies of knowledge were partly works of creative imagination and partly written from the memory which individuals or communities had of their past Also, as I have suggested, they played the all-important role of providing understanding to our society about itself, at the same time as they were the basis of praxis and intervention in shaping the future of our society

While the tradition of *ithasa* has very considerable antiquity in our society, the modern discipline of history, which is taught and written in our institutions of higher learning today, has a slightly different genealogy No less than *ithasa*, the discipline of history seeks to create for a society a memory of its past with the objective that I have already emphasised However, the creation of a historical narrative is a process quite different from the creation of the narrative of *ithasa* Historical scholarship, as we understand it in the formal centres of learning, dates back to the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and historical narratives were constructed by scholars through examining the documentation generated by the political actors of the past The basis on which the historical narrative is created, therefore, is substantially different from the basis from which the narrative of *ithasa* was created From this characterisation of history, it becomes clear why archival documentation becomes absolutely essential to the business of writing history

When the discipline of history crystallised in modern times, there was a great desire on the part of humanist scholars to create knowledge and understanding about human affairs which rested on the same certitudes that characterised scientific knowledge about nature and matter The belief that it is possible to replicate in human affairs the sort of knowledge that can be created in the scientific world, is called positivism, and when the foundations of modern history were laid in the nineteenth century, the ideology of positivism had wide prevalence in intellectual circles Scholars working under this impulse believed that through archival documentation they could produce knowledge about the human past which was as rigorous as the knowledge produced by the physicist, about the behaviour of inanimate matter, or the chemist about the structure and composition of organic and inorganic substances

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HOWEVER, the positivist assumptions of the historians of the nineteenth century did not last for very long For it was soon realised that in dealing with human affairs, scholars were engaged in understanding social entities which were qualitatively different from what constituted the subject matter of scientific inquiry Unlike inanimate matter, organic or inorganic, human beings had a conscious seat of intelligence in their psyche, and their thoughts and actions, therefore, could not be determined or analysed in a manner identical to the behaviour or composition of inanimate matter

As the world moved into the twentieth century, therefore, it became increasingly clear to historians that positivism was a misleading guide to humanistic inquiry, and that while humanistic knowledge could be rigorous, it was difficult to confer on it the objectivity, or the certitude, we tend to associate with the natural sciences Indeed, contemporaneously the notion of certitudes has broken down in the natural sciences also

All this leads us to examine afresh the relationship between history and ideology, on the one hand, and the role which history plays in shaping the future of a society, on the other We are all aware of the fact that the documentation on which the historian bases his narrative is so vast in bulk that the scholar needs an organising principle—a worldview, or an ideology—to cull out of raw data a narrative about the past All historical writing, therefore, rests on assumptions and pre-suppositions Nevertheless, we know from experience that the historical narrative is made up of two interlinked segments a segment which has a distinctive quality of "objectivity" about it, and a segment which leans heavily on the assumptions and worldviews which shape the narrative and give it a futuristic edge Consider the epic story of our Freedom Struggle, for instance There is a consensus among historians that India became independent on account of the non-violent struggle under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi There is another view that Indian independence would not have been possible without the violent uprisings of 1857, the tribal uprisings in the south and in the north-east, and the role played by the INA under the leadership of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose The third which has gained currency in recent years is that of the role of peasants, industrial workers and voluntary bodies popularly known as subaltern studies There could be a fourth view highlighting the significant contribution made by our creative people—writers, poets, musicians, dramatists, painters, journalists and others in giving meaning and content to social reforms and freedom movement The discipline of history, therefore, generates understanding and consciousness which has a profound influence upon "the likely, the possible and the desirable future of a society"

III

In my perception the social process includes the entire gamut of human activity relating to economic, religious, cultural and political pursuits It is also my conviction that the understanding of society is crucial for each generation of students Its relevance to Indians cannot be overemphasised as our civilisational attainments have been of enduring nature throughout our history of 5000 years and more In fact India's culture, which blossomed well before the Christian Era, gave successive generations of Indians a mindset, a value system and a way of living which despite the passage of time and an enormous growth in population have been retained with a remarkable continuity That gives the Indian a distinct personality today as it has done to him in the past By the year 1 AD India was a highly developed civilisation and the Indian accomplishments before the Christian Era in the realm of literature, art, dance, drama, poetry, economy, astronomy and religion have continued to influence Indians during the last two thousand years One is proud of the fact that with the possible exception of China, India is the only civilisation which has renewed itself from time to time and yet no major act of renewal or innovation has been a complete break from the past In our long history, we have rejected several deeply held views but, at the same time, have retained respect for and pride in our ancestors

We have made rapid progress in several spheres of human activity In 1800, a person could comfortably travel overland about 24 miles in a day This journey was accomplished in eight hours, at the fairly fast pace of three miles per hour It was not uncommon for men to walk 12 miles to have dinner and then 12 miles back home Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) sometimes walked that far to have dinner with Ralph Waldo Emerson (1805-1882), as Emerson tells us in his English Notes Carlyle could have covered the distance in less time on a horse, but he was poor and did not own one The forecast for the twentyfirst century is that a person can easily do more than 100 miles per day sitting in any car and more than 1000 miles on an average in an aeroplane In the realm of information we have entered into an era of super highways establishing not only access to information from another part of the globe but also sharing it with several persons simultaneously

Men and women, material and messages now travel from one corner of the globe to the other with greater speed than hitherto before This geographical mobility has been further strengthened by the information revolution which allows a person not only to see things through physical movement and get better known but also to sit and watch televisions, E-mails, newspapers of different countries and so on and get informed In fact, the information movement is much faster than supersonic jets

There are many in the world who believe that the perception of the oneness of our world may have dawned in the middle of the twentieth century when one saw the planet from space for the first time with the eyes and cameras of astronauts Seeing Planet Earth from space was certainly more revolutionary, but the idea of one world and the whole as one family was certainly much older Trackless centuries ago, Indian philosophers had declared, in words the meaning of which is as modern as the day after tomorrow, and that declaration freely rendered from Sanskrit verse would be as follows

> It is the small-minded who trivialise this world by their preoccupation with many kinds of divisions and demarcations which separate the peoples of the world Those who are generous of spirit and have a larger vision regard the whole world as one family (उदार चरितानाम, वसुधेव कुटुम्बकम)

Notwithstanding the philosophical backdrop of membership of the globe and the communication transformation and the information revolution that we are witnessing today, much depends upon the ability of a society to absorb these changes and play its role in the wider world In this context an individual's skills are very important and the acquisition of individual skill is directly related to the proficiency of institutions of learning and their capabilities and not merely on ancestral philosophy and global events

IV

MY occasional encounters with the history of Bihar landed me with a very significant observation from one young civil servant who was appointed as the first Settlement Officer of North Bihar with headquarters at Muzaffarpur in the first half of the eighteenth century McGovern was quite young and displays freshness of approach of a young student of history of Cambridge University when he writes in the Preface of his report that he had learnt about Bihar's rich cultural heritage from books and that he wanted to have a feel for it on the ground His understanding of the geography of North Bihar in terms of civilisational attainments made him rush to the villages of the present Darbhanga and Madhubani districts for it was in this land that systems of philosophy like Nyaya and Yoga had emanated He was astonished to see that the analytical faculties of the people of Mithila have over the ages lost its shine and they were steeped in poverty and ignorance but had preserved some sparks He wondered as to why it so happened but chose not to answer and took shelter for this non-answer under the plea that the report of the Settlement Officer is not required to go into replying to those questions

Ramdhari Singh Dinkar in his famous poem on Himalayas asked several relevant questions and I could do no better than to repeat some of these

तू पूछ अवध से, राम कहॉ? वृन्दा! बोलो, घनश्याम कहॉ?
ओ मगध! कहॉ मेरे अशोक? वह चन्द्रगुप्त बलधाम कहॉ?

पैरो पर ही है पडी हुई मिथिला भिखारिणी सुकुमारी,
तू पूछ कहॉ इसने खोई अपनी अनन्त निधियॉ सारी?

री कपिलवस्तु! कह बुद्धदेव के वे मगल उपदेश कहॉ?
तिब्बत, इरान, जापान, चीन तक गये हुए सदेश कहॉ?

वैशाली के भग्नावशेष से पूछ लिच्छवी-शान कहॉ?
ओ री उदास गडकी! बता विद्यापति-कवि के गान कहॉ?

रे, रोक युधिष्ठिर को न यहॉ, जाने दे उनको स्वर्ग धीर,
पर, फिरा हमे गाडीव-गदा, लौटा दे अर्जुन-भीम वीर।

तू मौन त्याग कर सिहनाद, रे तपी! आज तप का न काल।
नव-युग-शखध्वनि जगा रही, तू जाग, जाग, मेरे विशाल!

This poem of Dinkarji moved generations of young boys and girls and propelled them to action during the freedom struggle This poem is very relevant today as improvements in Bihar's economy and polity are urgently needed

It is necessary to ask such questions for history does not give replies without asking However, it is also true that history does not give replies merely because someone has asked a relevant question In my view the first requirement is to understand the present and it is this understanding that would enable us to draw the basic input in terms of influences of cultural belief, habits and even production processes It is also true that the people of the world are not going to respect the people of Bihar simply because of the fact that more than 2500 years ago Patna was the world's most beautiful and modern city or that Nalanda was the world's finest university or that Licchavis had a representative democracy It is true that we are successors of Panini, Aryabhatta, Kapila, Chanakya and several others At the same time where are we today? The situation could be summed up in the famous words of Munshi Prem Chand who brilliantly put it as follows

हमारे दादा को हाथी था, हम सीकर लिये फिरते है।

As we move into the new millennium there are certain attributes which would be common to the whole world These are computers, televisions, knowledge of sciences including outer space and market economy Every society must develop skills to compete in the new world This is related to educational attainments of a person and his practical knowledge One would miss the future notwithstanding his cultural heritage or basic richness of his mind if one has not acquired proficiency in new technology I am not denying the role of poetry, philosophy, folklore, songs, music, local languages and religious beliefs but these by themselves do not allow a society to establish its greatness in a competitive world

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We are celebrating the fiftieth year of the independence in year-long celebrations commencing from August 15, 1997 A close study of our contemporary history would reveal where we have gone wrong particularly in the context of Bihar This is, however, not an occasion to list out our achievements or shortcomings Every society must develop a healthy disregard for what was wrong with the past We must work to change this unsatisfactory status quo or in the opinion of several perceptive observers arrest further slide down to start with Eventually we would be raising our sights

The first and the foremost is education More than 50 per cent our people are illiterate including 70 per cent among the females It is, therefore, necessary for us to take this as a social challenge It also needs to be emphasised that literacy alone will not make Bihar a great land or Biharis a great people But this is basic The latest developments in information technology would demand that we start teaching our boys and girls in computer without any delay In fact it would be necessary for purposes of accelerating the pace of progress and also to bridge the gap between Bihar and the rest of the country to teach the upcoming boys and girls in computer literacy from Class III or IV itself The computer has emerged as the language of the present as well as of the future while computer itself is undergoing rapid change Some parts of India have shown the Indian capabilities and that Bihar could join that group for mastery over this language It is not a difficult cultural task but administrative arrangements need to be devised

The second important thing is in the realm of voluntary action The voluntary organisations need to grow rapidly Care needs to be taken that they are genuine and concerned about basic themes and principles like computer education, ecology, democratic rights, proper utilisation of public funds and the like With devolution of funds to the Panchayats and the emergence of a new leadership at the Panchayat level it should enable the NGOs to look at 'public money' with certain sensitivity and sharpen the consciousness of others This would lead to proper and full utilisation of funds This would also mean acceleration of the pace of growth in agriculture, industry, safe drinking water supply, public distribution system of essential commodities, healthy care and other civic amenities This new coalition of concerned citizens as against collectivity of interest groups would ensure a better society that our children and grandchildren will inherit

The third thing is really very significant in the context of Bihar as it concerns leadership in the social arena The social responsibility of those who are educated and have had the advantage of good education are enormous One really gets distressed to hear that highly placed and educated persons of Bihar do not want to live in Bihar We have a splendid tradition of sending our scholars, teachers not only in different parts of India but to the whole world Many people do not know that the father of Assam's greatest savant and teacher Sankardev was from Mithila People from Bihar have occupied high positions not only in India but people of Bihari origin have become Prime Ministers in distant lands During the last 100 years we have received teachers, doctors, engineers, journalists and other skilled persons from Bengal as well as from the south and have treated them with respect and they, in turn, have served not only in urban centres but in remote villages of Bihar I remember Dr N C Pal of my village Bihat and my English teacher, Prof M N Bose of G D College, Begusarai, respectively with gratitude and reverence It is, therefore, unfortunate that today we are rapidly losing our own capable persons to urban centres outside Bihar when they are needed in their home State I have been long enough in government to realise both the importance as well as limitations of a government It is the responsibility of the elite of every society and particularly more so of the elite of Bihar where the market forces are not fully developed to play the role of an agent of progress

Contemporary history teaches us that it is desirable to move resolutely in these directions Our ancient history tells us that we have not only a historical responsibility in this behalf but also a capability Lord Buddha's words in this context are still relevant

> And whosoever, Ananda, either now or after I am dead, shall be a lamp unto themselves, and a refuge unto themselves, shall be taken themselves to no external refuge, but holding fast to the Truth as their lamp, shall not look for refuge to any one besides themselves—it is they who shall reach the very topmost height' But they must be anxious to learn'

Let me end with Lord Buddha's last words uttered before his death in 463 BC at the age of eighty

> Now then, O monks, I address you Subject to decay are compound things Strive with earnestness ■

BURMA-CHINA TIE-UP

How Far Does It Affect India?

BATUK VORA

The Union of Myanmar, called Burma before 1989, has increasingly been drawn into the Chinese sphere of influence, according to Donald Seekins, a US expert on the subject. This is bound to create ripples in India's defence establishment. But how far can it go and what India can do about it are two vital and complex questions that need cool thinking before jumping to any conclusion.

Information on Sino-Burmese military cooperation in the Indian Occean is scanty, unrealiable and even biased, according to Seekins, a UC Berkeley scholar, writing his study paper on the subject. Such information mainly comes from the Indian side

> who have a stake in defending the budgetary turf of the Indian armed forces. 20 scary images of Chinese submarines gliding into bases along the Andaman Sea will not become a reality soon, given Beijing's continued lack of modern blue water navy.

Chinese military and commercial activities along the Burmese coast fronting the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal are still a focus of neighbourhood observers since the 1990s. A Western intelligence sattelite in 1992 detected a 50-metre radar antenna on the Coco islands (Burmese territory) located just north of the Andaman (Indian territory). It was believed that the Chinese technicians supervised its construction. China also constructed a small arms factory—manufacturing rifles, machine guns and ammunition—near Magwe in central Burma in 1993.

Any Chinese military presence along Burma's coast, however, has wideranging repercussions, admits the study.

- First, the expansion of Sino-Burmese installations in the Indian Ocean would constitute a direct challenge to India's non-negotiable claim to supremacy in this region.
- Second, the installations, especially Zadetky Island in the south, are close to Indonesia which is suspicious of the "Chinese regional ambitions". It is perhaps because of this that, noted Seekins, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam have grown receptive to the idea of strengthening economic and even security ties with India as a counterbalance to China.
- Third, these installations have the potential of threatening free passage through the Strait of Malacca, the principle sea link between the Indian Ocean and South China Sea.

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BURMA has abandoned *de facto* its status as a non-aligned country. The State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) has now gained even the ASEAN group's recognition, ignoring the strong opposition of Burma's freedom fighters led by the Nobel Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi.

While abandoning the policy of non-alignment the Burmese military rulers built the country's foreign relations mainly with Beijing. They needed military assistance in the late 1980s and early 1990s when Burma was cash hungry and isolated. China rushed to its aid. The junta played this China card well enough to prod the other Asian neighbours—the ASEAN countries and India.

Available data suggests that China was not the country with the largest economic presence in Burma till recently. Japan was the single largest national source of imports—28.6 per cent in 1992-93, while the South-East Asian nations, principally Thailand and Singapore, provided 32.1 per cent and China just 17.6 per cent in the same period. India even now stands as one of the most important export markets for Burma. But the situation is changing now.

China's economic presence spreads faster in Burma than of any other of its neighbours. According to reports, China and SLORC intend during the latter half of the year to sign an agreement to develop a transport corridor from Kunming, the Yunnan province's capital, to Rangoon by way of a road to Bhamo in northern Burma and the Irrawaddy river. This road is only 1300 kms long compared to the 5800 kms between Kunming and Shanghai and that would connect China's interior to the Indian Ocean.

This is over and above China's aid to build a "Burma Road" in the north of Burma, with a new Chinese built bridge spanning the Shweli river that separates the two countries. China's economic influence now spreads to Mandalay, the second largest city, that has enjoyed a real estate boom due to Chinese land purchases and fast development.

The commercial centre of the old royal city has become a high priced "China Town" while the local Burmese, too poor to afford rising property prices, have been forced to move to the city's outskirts. According to an observer, as many as 23,000 Chinese nationals settled here in 1992 and more 27,000 in 1993[1] There are clear signs of a repeat of anti-Chinese riots of 1967 born from the discontent of locals SLORC has closed its eyes while thousands of Chinese get their ID cards, possessing the same rights as locals

The emergence of "Golden Quadrangle" encompassing Yunnan (China's southern province), Upper Burma, Northern Thailand and Laos, could tighten the Chinese economic control and link interior China to the Indian Ocean by way of Burmese ports

◆

THERE has been a great deal of person-to-person diplomacy at the top level since 1989 Before the Chinese Premier, Li Peng, visited Rangoon in 1994, the Burmese Generals like Than Shwe and Saw Maung had visited Beijing with a large retinue of officials Khin Nyuat, a major force behind the Burma-China alliance, made a second visit in 1994 and a third in 1996 But not all armymen were happy about this In 1992, military intelligence agents uncovered an assassination plot against Khin Nyuat among many officers who believed he had sold his nation's independence to Beijing

China's military presence in Burma has manifested itself in three ways first, sale by China of approximately $1 4 billion worth of advanced weaponry to SLORC, second, Chinese assistance in the construction of military facilities that could pave the way for significant Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean, third, the Chinese pressure on ethnic minority insurgents in the Burma-China border to make peace with SLORC

Yunnan of China is landlocked and one of the prime concerns of China is to build a strong road network through Burma to get an access to the Indian Ocean for trade and strategic reasons

India's response, says Seekins, to the Chinese presence in Burma has been complex India adopted a soft approach to entice SLORC away from Beijing's growing influence, perhaps because it wanted SLORC's support in the suppression of India's ethnic rebels and the cross-border heroin trade Cross-border trade has increased after India softened its attitude to SLORC How otherwise India can handle the situation is not suggested by Seekins ■

CELEBRATING AN ANNIVERSARY

The End of a National Project : An Argument

RANDHIR SINGH

The author is a renowned Marxist scholar and ideologue whose radical ideas have survived the vicissitudes of our times A Professor of Political Theory (now retired) in the University of Delhi, he has written the following argument for Mainstream *readers, largely based on his* Five Lectures in Marxist Mode

To borrow from Tom Paine's metaphoric rejoinder to Burke's attack on the French Revolution, admiration for the "plumage" of India's "national development" should not prevent us from seeing its failure in "the dying bird" The world indeed looks very different from below, when the poor and oppressed of "our nation" look at it

The most important fact of modern times, over the past few centuries, is the 'meta-narrative' of capitalism which is still on, more dominant globally than ever before, and more lethal too, for it is now a capitalism living beyond its historical time, its creative achievement all behind it and only destructive potentialities ahead, a threat looming large over the future of humankind The structural logic of capitalism, the law-like tendencies of its capital-accumulative process, which Marx explicated, have meant uneven and unequal development within and across countries, generating wealth and affluence at one end and poverty and deprivation at the other (even when this is somewhat curbed in the advanced centres of capitalism) Worldwide, the inexorable consequence has been a gap between the centre and the periphery of global capitalism, an ever-widening gap between wealth and poverty at the two poles

Hence a worldwide struggle against capitalism, which in the periphery meant a struggle to get out of this global system in order to be at all able to build a better a life for the common people

A major breakthrough in this struggle occurred (as anticipated by Marx and Engels) in the aftermath of the First World War—an Europewide revolution, triggered off by the Russian Revolution But of this only the revolution in Russia survived—elsewhere it was let down by social democracy and strangled by capitalist counter-revolution—leaving Lenin and Bolsheviks confronting a totally unanticipated situation, and a problem what does their poor and backward country do in the midst of global domination of capitalism? History had played a trick on the doctrine of Karl Marx instead of socialism being built on a base provided by the economic, political and cultural achievements of capitalism, a backward country was called upon to build it Lenin saw this as a struggle where 'defeat' was a distinct possibility, and wrote 'struggle, and struggle alone, decides how far we shall advance' But the struggle, particularly after Lenin's departure was not adequate enough A deeply deformed socialism was built and now, seventy years later, a finally defeated Russia has been sucked back into global capitalism What has happened was not inevitable But the fact remains that we are now left with only the 'experience (that) will benefit other revolutions', the least that Lenin had hoped for in the event of defeat, and the still unsettled question what does a backward country do in a situation of global domination of capitalism?

Modern India and its struggle for freedom is a 'meta-narrative' within the global meta-narrative of capitalism Before 1947, we were part of a global system, well-integrated into a world market economy We *were* globalised, but we did not like it Our globalisation then also had a name, imperialism, and we struggled against it, precisely because it meant the accumulation of wealth in England and poverty in India Like other Third World countries we wanted to get out of this globalisation to be able to opt for an independent, self-reliant development in the interests of our common people This is where lay the essential meaning of our long struggle for freedom

We won our freedom in 1947 To understand what *really* happened in this historic event, it helps to think of what did *not* happen at the time There was no revolutionary overthrow of the British imperialist rule in India, no accompanying economic or social or even political revolution The Gandhi-bourgeois led freedom struggle (a defensible and better description than any other) ended in a compromise and settlement with imperialism which transferred political power from the foreign rulers to the Indian rulers, leaving the old socio-economic and state-bureaucratic structures largely intact which, in turn, with all their structural compulsions, became the basis for the post-colonial 'national development' This development has carried the full impress of the way freedom was finally 'won' in 1947

The post-colonial rulers in India, having gained power in the state, went on to set up a 'national project' of self-reliant economic development to supplement the recently won political freedom with the more important economic freedom for the Indian people The Soviet Union was seen as an example of successful state intervention in economy (which the Indian bourgeoisie itself deemed necessary), the Cold War allowed the new rulers a certain manoeuvrability of action, and Nehru's 'socialistic pattern of society' soon provided the necessary ideological underpinning for the post-colonial process of national reconstruction, with its focus on the state sector to build up the economy, affirmative action for the most disadvantaged sections of society and economic growth in general which was to benefit the people at large The project was not lacking in vision and it soon had significant achievements to its credit But despite Nehru's awareness of the 'terrible costs of not changing the existing order', his project was no radical break with 'the existing order', vindicating Marx who had, in his analysis of the failed German revolution of 1848, already said that henceforth the bourgeoisie could not be relied upon to make success of even a bourgeois democratic revolution

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THE Nehru era was the golden age of India's national project, though it was never without its critics The slogan was 'growth with justice' Acting as 'the executor of the economic necessities of the national situation', as Engels once put it, the Indian state indeed ensured growth in the economy but the hope for justice to people was largely belied The years that followed revealed the inherent limitations of the Nehruvian national project and saw its rapid disintegration The structural logic of 'the existing order' prevailing, the economy was soon 'some strange kind of corrupted capitalist growth', as Romesh Thapar saw it, or 'a type of capitalist development in the interests of a narrow section of Indian society', as V K R V Rao put it As it finally came up, it could be more firmly described as an India-specific capitalism which reminded one of Marx's observations about countries which

> suffer not only from the development of capitalist production but also from the incompleteness of that development Alongside of modern evils a whole series of inherited evils oppress us, arising from the passive survival of antiquated modes of production with their inevitable train of social and

> political anachronisms We suffer not only from the living but from the dead

As capitalism, its structural logic meant unequal and uneven development in the country—'two nations' (the rich and the poor) and 'internal colonialism' (in relation to the country's more backward parts) As for its specificity, this is how I put it sometime back

> Its historical specificity has given it a strong comparador and lumpen character, presided over as it is by a bourgeoisie born old without ever having known youth, with none of the possible virtues of youth and all the vices of old age Here all the exploitative and oppressive evils of belated capitalist development, semi-feudalism, bureaucratically-corrupt public sector and bloated bourgeois politics daily enter into and reinforce each other All pervasive black money, flourishing as a parallel economy, only intensifies the structural biases of a white money of scams and swindles, even as it serves to sustain, with help from politicians, policemen and sundry state functionaries, an essentially illegal, secular or communal *mafiosi*-led parallel political polity, which has today come to acquire an almost legitimised coexistence with the formally legal state in large, especially urban, parts of the country A long time ago, apropos the essentially secondary character of such capitalist development, Karl Marx had written "as is well known, secondary diseases are more difficult to cure and, at the same time, ravage the body more than original ones"

Outside of economy it was soon a case of the 'state as private property' and any kind of power in the state a means of 'rapid private accumulation', the state in India far from being a part of any solution itself became a part of almost every problem Democracy, still valuable to people and throughout defended by them against subversion from above, yet only vindicated Bagehot's classic observation about its being 'the way to give the people the greatest illusion of power while allowing them the smallest amount in reality', even as it also served to legimise the ruling class domination in society 'Democratic politics' itself steadily degenerated into an utterly unscrupulous, no-holds-barred infighting among the beneficiaries of the system for power and pelf in the state, where it was truly the end justifying the means, literally any means, it was Malraux's "politicians' politics" in its worst sense

The national project was fast ending up as a class project but not recognised as such It had its beneficiaries, and there was a consensus of the arrived and the complacent about it Nationalism too had its uses, the emerging reality could be obscured in its name Such was the domination of the ruling class ideas that even those who saw capitalism, saw it more as our very own 'national economy', and together with faith and force of habit it ensured the prevalence of the view that the national project was still on But there was nothing much in it for the vast masses of the common Indian people To borrow from Tom Paine's metaphoric rejoinder to Burke's attack on the French Revolution, the 'plumage' of India's 'national development' was yet that of a 'dying bird' The world looked very different from below, when the poor and oppressed of 'our nation' looked at it However, the definitive collapse of the national project was still in the future

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MID-SIXTIES onwards the post-colonial national project in India floundered and fast degenerated, its economic crises underpinning and moving in step with the crises of the political system, 'democratic politics' and all that If India's 'national economy' generated any number of potentially explosive issues, its 'national politics' regularly turned these issues into problems, problems into running sores and these sores into tragedies for the Indian people By the end of the eighties the national project was virtually over Soon enough a dead-end economic crisis or financial bankruptcy of sorts, produced by the previously pursued policies, coincided with the defeat of the Soviet Union in the Cold War and its eventual disintegration, depriving the Indian ruling classes of whatever little manoeuvrability they still had and leaving them more vulnerable than ever before to the offensive of a recharged global capitalism Given the strong comprador or lumpen strain inherent in their character, led by their major political formation, the Congress-I, with their other political formations in tow, they succumbed, and hiccups and protests notwithstanding, opted for what is turning out to be a junior partnership within the global capitalist system As beneficiaries of 'growth' during the Nehru era and afterwards, and now with a substantial economic strength of their own, globalisation also provides them with new avenues of profitmaking at home and abroad Therefore, this 'succumbing' can also be seen as a natural progress for Indian capitalism India was again globalised, this time through a largely voluntary submission of the Indian rulers The national project finally and definitively collapsed in 1991

The evidence of this collapse is there in the disintegration of values and degradation of life all around us, in the continuing poverty of our people and growing consumerism of the elites and a society at once cynical and fearful about the future It is there in official statistics and pages of the private media and so-called 'national mainstream' which, bearing the impress of India's corrupt and corrupting, somewhat lumpen capitalist development, is an increasingly dirty affair—corrupt, commercial and criminalised, a repressingly homogenising mainstream. The evidence is there in the visionless and so obviously laboured efforts of the powers-that-be to flog a tired and flabby patriotism into some semblance of life in this fiftieth year of India's independence. And this evidence is pathetically present in the impotence (or is it hypocrisy?) of the supposedly 'stirring' calls being made on the occasion, in Parliament for a 'second freedom struggle' and by the Prime Minister to 'begin the struggle for economic freedom'! One wonders what these past fifty years have been about. A Finance Minister took India back into globalisation on the dishonest plea that 'the nation has been living beyond its means'—'nation' indeed, when a good majority of our people have simply no means to live and most others none to indulge any 'living beyond'! His successor, more honest and ideologically committed, has been publicly pleading with the former globalisers to come back to India for another, equally long stay! The post-colonial national project is indeed over and done with.

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CAPITALISM is today so powerful and pervasive as to have become invisible. You no longer mention or recognise it. It is there, but without a name as it were, a harmless, nay benevolent, phenomenon called 'globalisation', recently arrived on the world scene to help the poor and backward countries out of their problems. Globalisation, nevertheless, has a proper name, capitalism, its world economy or market is a capitalist world economy or market. Harvard economist Robert Reich's phrase 'secession of the successful, is vividly expressive of a crucial feature of any capitalist market society. Globalisation of India means that the 'successful' of Indian society, the ruling elites of India, have decided to 'secede' from the common Indian people. A capitalist market society is also a case of 'the economy is doing fine, the people are not', as a President of Brazil once reported it in Washington. Therefore, the Indian economy may do 'fine' (with its growth rates, etc.) but, given its structural logic, the Indian people will not, for them, the consequences of the current globalisation are not likely to be much different from those of the globalisation they had struggled hard and long to finally escape in 1947.

The ruling classes of India have, through their different political formations, decided to 'secede' from the people and opted for 'globalisation' as their strategic option for the future. The Indian people yet again face the question, whose full implications were somewhat obscured in 1947 due largely to the interim successes of the Soviet Union: what do *they* do in the current situation of global domination of capitalism? The historical experience in India and elsewhere in the Third World makes it abundantly clear that they will find no answers in capitalism, national or globalised. The choice for them remains socialism or peripheralisation. This is not to posit socialism as achievable today or tomorrow, or even the day-after for that matter, but to posit it as the principle governing people's politics today, which links together their immediate, ongoing and emerging, struggles in an ultimate project of revolutionary transformation of our society, as the goal of a long transitional process, whose specifics and speed will depend upon the objective material conditions and the nature and balance of the class forces involved at each stage of the struggle for it. Immediately, it means saying 'no' to globalisation. This is not to argue for any kind of 'autarky' in economic development but to pose the issue of this development being governed by *external* imperatives, those issuing from the requirements of the world capitalist market (export-led growth, etc.) and the associated consumerism of the rich, or primarily by *internal* imperatives, those flowing from an assessment of our own resources and the needs of our people.

The issue, in other words, is that of priorities: development for what and whom? Is it to satisfy the basic needs of the people or the consumerism of the elites in our society? The argument is for a pro-people socialism-oriented endogenous development process which draws on our own strengths, our domestic resources and capacities, including those of the hard working poor who still remain the most creative and productive in our society, a development which gives the common people, in both urban and rural areas, a positive stake in the economy and mobilises them for building a better society and, let me add, for the inevitable struggle against global imperialism and its local allies or partners. This has to be the alternative strategic option of the Indian people.

Technological backwardness is often pressed as an argument to counter the plea for such autonomous economic development in a Third World country. Here, apart from the fact that in India at least we are not that lacking in either technology or the talent for it, we need to overcome the widely prevalent fetishism of science and technology, which at times (as, for example, with Nehru and his 'temples of modern India', etc) has even gone to the extent of expecting them to do the job of a social revolution, which they simply cannot As with economics so with technology, the question again is one of priorities technology for what purpose? Once this question is asked, the argument for getting access to the most modern Western technology, via globalisation, even if that was certain which it certainly is not, loses much of its force If the purpose is to satisfy the consumerist hunger of the privileged part of our population with the most modern gadgets and designs, and the goodies of the West, then rushing into globalisation indeed makes some sense But if the purpose or priority is to meet the needs of all the people for decent food, clothing and shelter, clean water, proper sanitation and health protection, education and cultural opportunities, and the like, then devoting scarce resources to the most modern technology is simply wasteful, because there is little in the latest technology of the West that could make a significant contribution In fact what is most useful and relevant in technology, Western or otherwise, for improving the way of life of the masses; is widely known, what is more, most of it is already availably at home, and what else is needed, is obtainable in the normal course of managed trade

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A socialism-oriented autonomous economic development as a strategic option for our people is premised on politics and *not* the market commanding the economy (which, however, does not rule out an useful role for the market) If such development is necessary in the interests of our people and they have no choice but to attempt it if they would avoid peripheralisation, with the people really in power it is also possible The failure of the world's first experiment in socialism notwithstanding, there is much in its experience to help guide this attempt and be hopeful about it for example, in the still unparalleled achievements of the early years of the post-revolutionary societies in Russia and elsewhere despite their economic backwardness, in Cuba's heroic struggle to save the gains of its revolution, in Lenin's socialist project during the few years that he survived the October Revolution, in the experience of the 'Mao years' in China, and so on An uncharted territory, we can still enter it with confidence

The crux of the matter is people's power in the state, their 'political supremacy' in society, as Marx put it Not a phoney 'empowerment' from above, but people fighting and winning power for themselves through their own struggles, is central to securing a pro-people economic development in the country 'National politics' of the day is almost exhausted so far as promotion of people's interest is concerned, it is today virtually parasitic on these interests The traditional Left, content all these years to operate only on the terrain of bourgeois politics, has finally lost out to it, and does not seem likely to recover its original commitment to revolutionary politics or socialism But life continues to stir on the ground, the terrain where the real struggle for people's power begins—some old radical initiatives persist and many new ones are emerging everywhere People will surely have to go through the hard and painful school of experience and survive the all too many wrong battles they are misled into fighting before they learn to fight the right battles of their own But learn they will Globalisation itself, as it proceeds apace, will clarify as nothing else could, the real issues of Indian economy and politics, the issues of class divisions and exploitation, of the rich and the poor within the nation, and thus help people see through the ruling class politics of different varieties and come to a politics of their own, articulate their diverse struggles with a class-based people's politics, at both local and national levels, and confront the strategic option of the ruling classes, globalisation, with their own strategic option of a socialism-oriented autonomous economic development in the country They will need to do so, the alternative is only their further peripheralisation within the global capitalist system

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THE post-colonial national project may have collapsed and, in terms of their objective interests, the paths of the ruling elites and the people may have diverged as never before, but *nationalism* yet remains a very strong sentiment among our people Many of those who would agree with me may still regard the struggle for a socialism-oriented autonomous economic development as a national struggle, a continuation, as it were, of the Indian people's earlier national struggle for freedom This calls for a brief comment and clarification

Nationalism, however 'ambiguous' an identity, and undoubtedly a powerful social, political and ideological force in our times, is yet a historical phenomenon with class and society-specific character, potentialities and limitation, and therefore capable of manifesting itself in diverse forms Located as we are in the Third World and with the still alive, though much faded, memories of our long struggle for freedom, we in this country are conventionally inclined to see nationalism as a liberationist force or ideology But this is not always or necessarily the case with nationalism With the ruling classes in the normal pursuit of their interests, or when faced with situations of crisis, nationalism has often taken all sorts of anti-people imperialist or statist, or racist or fascist forms, providing ideological support to ruling class politics and political domination at home and abroad In our own country, more particularly in recent decades, nationalism has been used by the post-colonial rulers to cover up or find alibis for their defaults, to conceal the social reality or our much divided and exploitative society, to divert people away from their real concerns and mobilise them behind ruling class politics One political formation of the ruling classes has even come up with a Hindu-chauvinist nationalism, 'cultural nationalism' as they call it, to gain popular support and in the name of *'swadeshi'* better defend the interests of India's 'national' capitalism

Nationalism in India before 1947 was indeed progressive, under a different, more advanced class leadership and programme, it could have been radical, even revolutionary It was progressive because it aimed at resolving the basic structural contradictions of Indian society, congealed in imperialism, whose resolution alone could clear the path for the Indian people's struggle for a better life The struggle to resolve them, *against* imperialism, was our national struggle for freedom But after 1947, with the post-colonial rulers having facilitated a historically specific form of capitalist development in the country, the basic contradictions that now need to be resolved to clear the path for the Indian people's continuing struggle for a better life lie *within* the nation, and their resolution is a matter of struggle within, against the Indian ruling classes, therefore, strictly speaking, this struggle cannot be viewed as a national struggle In fact the Indian people's continuing struggle against imperialism, globalisation's neo-colonialism, too is now a part of *this* struggle and not a continuation of the old pre-1947 anti-imperialist struggle, because the neo-colonialist 'integration', rather reintegration, into the global capitalist economy is now occurring by the grace of, through the opportunities provided by, indeed at the invitation of, the new rulers at Delhi Nationalism or a national perspective only obscures this most basic of all issues facing the Indian people

Thus, the struggle for a people's strategic option as against 'globalisation' that the Indian ruling classes have opted for, the struggle for a socialism-oriented autonomous development—which alone can also be an ecologically sustainable development as against a globalised Indian capitalism, subject to the capital-accumulative or profit-making imperatives of the market—is not a national struggle as such, nor a continuation of the earlier national struggle in India, though it can be and needs to be seen as its transcendence in a strictly dialectical sense, that is, a struggle that carries forward the best traditions and hopes of the earlier liberationist struggles of the Indian people It is in its basic character a class struggle in the proper Marxian sense which eschews its narrow economistic or reductionist interpretations No doubt a great deal of tactical resilience is necessary in relating it, theoretically as well as practically, to the obviously important question of nationalism But even if this struggle is viewed as a national struggle of the Indian people it can be nothing else but fighting the 'anti-nation within the nation', as the Latin-Americans have learnt to call it, or 'rescuing the nation' from its ruling classes, or, as Marx would have put it, the people 'establishing itself as the nation', and thus remains, in its essential content, a class struggle, it is not a collective struggle of *all* Indians for a common goal, for the goals have diverged The national task, recovering India for its people, is now, as it were, also a class task of the Indian people Such has to be the perspective of the Indian people's struggles for a better life today ■

ASGHAR Threat to Diversity

(Continued from page 14)

The BJP tried to exploit this religious fervour among the Hindus to capture political power The BJP targetted the biggest religious minority to consolidate the Hindu votes and thus greatly increased its representation in Parliament But thanks to the resilience of our secular democratic polity, this religious fervour could not be politically exploited indefinitely The Muslim masses too have developed a new awakening and no other religio-political movement on the scale of the Shah Bano movement can be launched by the fundamentalist forces This was possible only because of the democratic space available here as well as the political resilience of our secular democratic polity ■

BOOK REVIEW

Political Economy of Economic Development

ARUN GHOSH

Economic Reforms The Role of States and Centre-State Relations, Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi, 1996

It is difficult to review a volume containing articles/speeches by a total of thirtysix personages, some of them eminent analysts and authors, some others people in high position One should commence by congratulating the Observer Research Foundation for organising a two-day seminar to discuss not only the *economic* aspects (and impact) of the 'economic reforms' launched in June 1991 but also the *political* aspects, and in particular the vital issues pertaining to federal politics in India There is a tendency, of late, among economic theorists to limit their analytical horizon to purely economic issues, when historically, classical economic theory was embedded in the socio-political framework of the country in which diverse economic doctrines were propounded from time to time Indeed, the early authors talked of *political economy* rather than of 'economics', it was only with Alfred Marshall and his *Principles of Economics* that *economics* came to be treated as a distinctive area of thought (at least in Anglo-Saxon literature on the subject)

While the initiative of the Observer Research Foundation is, therefore, to be commended, the contents of the volume incorporating the proceedings of the seminar are expectedly a highly mixed bag, inevitably so Because of the standing of the participants, the organisers simply presented all that was circulated (as theme papers) and all that was said Seminar discussions do not make interesting reading The volume is thus full of some profound and a large number of very trite statements Regrettably, some of the theme papers are also of the latter category

It may be useful, therefore, not to review what the thirtysix participants had to say (either in writing or orally), it may be more interesting to make these discussions a peg on which to hang a tale And the tale is important it concerns not only the economics of development but also the politics of the development effort, it encompasses the problem of *human development* (not the vulgarised programme of human resource development, for then the question arises human resource development—for whose benefit?) And yet, one cannot but comment briefly on the way the seminar discussion was organised

The reviewer, a distinguished economist, is a former Member of the Planning Commission

In a sense, the 'objectives' of the seminar were obviously confused The focus of the discussions on the first day was primarily on the role of the state in the process of 'economic reform', the theme paper—while correctly stating that "the role of the State Governments is crucial"—goes on to hint that "unbridled government spending, unaccompanied by commensurate revenue mobilisation" stems primarily from the State Governments' failure on this account "The States, after all, account for over 54 per cent of the combined current and capital disbursements of both the State Governments and the Centre," the theme paper emphasises, and goes on to say that "there can be no 'rationalisation' of public expenditure without concomitant spending restraint on the part of the State Governments" Not only is this warped viewpoint further elaborated, it is fully reinforced by the renowned fiscal expert, Dr Raja Chelliah, who pronounces that

> opportunities for a more decentralised federation can only happen if the States change their attitude They should generate new ideas as to how they should function The way is now open for the States to do so because the Centre has given up so many of its powers it has been wrongly assumed by many people that as of the 1990s the States are starved of resources

That is interesting, because the Centre has not given up its powers, it has really *abdicated* its responsibilities

Further comments are both unnecessary and futile It is obvious that each one of us looks at the world through his (or her) own coloured glasses What astonishes one is the sheer *arrogance* of those in any position of some authority at the Centre

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INCIDENTALLY, on a small point of detail, some remarks of Dr Chelliah need to be reproduced and commented on He correctly mentioned that

> if we do not reform the SEBs, our industrial growth is going to be seriously affected The Sharad Pawar Committee has come out with recommendations which come almost to privatisation but that is not necessary as long as you make the SEBs independent of the State Governments

Very true, and very convincing, but as a halftruth, it beats the famous saga of *"Ashwatthama hato "* in the *Mahabharata* As recently as January 1997, *all* State Power Ministers stated with *one* voice, that (a) a rationalisation of power tariffs was essential, and (b) for political reasons, the Centre should come out with a firm policy in this regard because the Chief Ministers (in States which provided 'food security' in the country) found it to be politically difficult to enforce a more rational power tariff Meanwhile, however, the Centre had proceeded to compound the problem (a) by agreeing to all sorts of guarantees and conditionalities in regard to eight Foreign Investor Promoted (fast track) power projects, which would not only be a millstone for the concerned SEBs but have in fact set the tone for the minimum 'demands' of the private investors, and (b) by inviting World Bank financed consultants who have advised the State Governments (and the Centre) specifically on how to "unbundle" the power sector and to privatise it, in short, how to destroy not only the Indian electricity industry but also the (world class) power equipment manufacturing industry in India It is worth pointing out that South Korea—the epitome of private enterprise—felt it necessary to *nationalise* its privately owned power utility companies in the eighties Also, incidentally, *competition* is possible only in a milieu of surplus availability This basic point is frequently missed What we need in the power sector today is more, much more public investment Even Dr Manmohan Singh *now* admits that it was a mistake not to provide more public funds for power development in the Eighth Plan (though one is not sure what he would do in practice if returned to power)

But we have spent considerable space on a peripheral issue The gut issues discussed on the second day concern problems of federal finance, and more importantly, the issues in federal politics and the role of the institutions

The discussion on these themes, especially on the politics of federalism, was outstanding, and some of the theme papers as well as several interventions are not only worth perusal but merit a continuing debate in regard to *how* precisely we should endeavour to revitalise our political framework

Two sentences from Prof Ashwini Ray's intervention are worth reproducing here First,

> none of the principal architects of the reform package have had any democratic mandate for the offices held by them, and secondly, there is little in the package that is strikingly original, innovative or distinctive, despite the claims of its present authors

Prof Ray concludes that

> in the inequitable global market, we have clearly opted to be the customers, the donors who invest in us must have their 'pound of flesh'

India in August 1997

As we celebrate the fiftieth year of India's independence with fanfare, we need to ask ourselves two questions First, how do we preserve our national identity in the coming years, in the face of increasing 'dissent' and pressure from local groups, aided and abetted by insidious external funding (of such disparate voices) on a large scale? Secondly, how precisely do we reorganise both our polity and our economy—and what institutions do we strengthen and what methods do we employ—in order to attain both economic development and political stability? For essentially, as of today, with the growth of lumpenised politics simultaneously with a steady increase in the 'repressive' character of the state, these are the most important issues before the nation today

The existence of some lumpens in all countries and at all times, is one of the unfortunate realities that one must accept *Greed* is the main cause, coupled with the fact that *violence* is also a human characteristic which gets restrained only in waves of reformist movements The problem, the gut problem is how does the state organise itself to ensure the well-being and welfare of the bulk of citizens?

The background and the genesis of the confusion in politics, of the emergence of increasing sectarianism, of increasing violence in India, are easy to discern Over long years, disparities in living standards have been growing The percentage of people below the poverty line may have declined between 1977 and 1997—though there is some evidence of an increase even in regard to the percentage of persons below the poverty line in recent years—the absolute number of people living in abject poverty, at some 360 million, is staggering, unconscionable, and unacceptable

And, there are any number of attendant disabilities, absence of facilities normally available to all citizens in civilised countries, for the bulk of the population Absence of universal primary education and health care and the wide prevalence of malnutrition and debilitating chronic diseases make for not only degrading living standards but also for an inefficient workforce Even potable drinking water is not available in many villages, and women and children have not only to fetch water but also collect twigs and other fuelwood, getting scarcer by the day, over long distances The cultivable land is getting sub-divided into smaller and smaller plots leading to uneconomic husbandry, and a mounting landless workforce finds regular employment hard to come by, not only in the rural areas but also in urban areas These mundane details are well known and recognised, yet, they do not appear to arouse the political concern required for effective positive action

These facts are well known and need no reiteration What is strange is the failure to recognise that the genesis of the recent divisive political forces lies in the shocking disparities and lack of opportunities, not only among clearly demarcated communities but also regions Divisive forces naturally tend to highlight (and take advantage of) the backwardness of certain religious communities, of certain castes, of the Scheduled Tribes people generally, and even certain well-demarcated regions of the country

The country is awash with foreign funds, the precise sources not being clear, nor the motivation behind the large-scale inflow of such funds

One of the major problems herein lies in the use of catchwords, in 'disinformation', indeed in certain privileged groups of society making propaganda in regard to past failures not for the benefit of the country, nor for correcting earlier mistakes but essentially for personal aggrandisement If the past policies have not resolved the country's problems, it is stated by this group, we must dramatically change over to a new set of policies (which are known to have failed dismally wherever tried), pushed by interested imperial powers

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Two points need to be briefly mentioned here, before the *socio-political* issues facing the country are frontally addressed As far back as in May 1979, the Committee on Controls and Subsidies—then known as the Dagli Committee—of which the present writer was the Member-Secretary, came down heavily against the extant 'control' regime But, what is totally missed out by the Indian neophytes to Western neoclassical economic thought is that bureaucratic controls and effective state intervention are not the same thing, what is forgotten is that *non-discretionary* state intervention (which is what the Dagli Committee had recommended) and planning are quite consistent Secondly, if the experience of the East Asian Miracle countries in the post-War world is any guide, *effective state intervention* provides the key to the success of the development effort by any country which desires to 'leap frog' into the realm of development, to coalesce in a generation (or two) what has taken Western Europe some two centuries to achieve And, this is possible because of revolutionary changes in the realm of technology

The second point to note is the danger, in today's world, of being totally swamped by inflows/outflows of speculative finance capital In 1995, the total cross-country flows of capital—over a 365-day period —was some 50 times the volume of the total world trade in 1995 (of the order of $5000 billion, implying cross-country short-term capital flows of around $2,50,000 billion) One should note that FDI flows in 1995 were less than $380 billion It is this new menace, the scourge of speculative finance capital, intent on acquisition of undervalued assets (with a view to making quick capital gains) that developing countries need to guard against The recent experience of some ASEAN countries (especially Thailand) which had relied on short-term capital inflows to redress their balance of payments deficit, should be an eye-opener to policy-makers in all developing countries Unfortunately, the only thing that history teaches us is that history teaches us nothing Our foreign exchange reserves are increasing as a result of speculative capital inflow, even as our trade and current payments deficit keeps mounting We are yet to draw any lessons from the recent experience of Thailand and the other ASEAN countries Prime Minister Gujral talks loftily of the $30 billion exchange reserves, from the ramparts of the Red Fort, on August 15 And, our policy-makers who have been deluding Indians all along in regard to our *strong*(?) balance of payments position (pace the growing exchange reserves)—when our trade deficit keeps widening, the reserves being the result of speculative capital inflow—have been caught in a trap of their own making, with the WTO now insisting on the quick removal of all Quantitative Restrictions on imports After all, why should rich Indians not be able to buy bathroom fittings made of gold?

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So much for the issue of economic reform, which unfortunately has been distorted, garbled, and indeed *misused* in order to reduce the presence of the state even in the areas of education and health care, to sell off prize assets by way of the equity of crucial public enterprises, to hand over high profit activities to favoured private parties Let us now turn briefly to some of the other gut issues discussed in the two-day seminar organised by the Observer Research Foundation

Prof C P Bhambri, at one point, quoted Samir Amin's highly observant statement that "the need of the Third World is popular national states" What kind of state would be popular? Obviously, one which is informed in all to actions by a deep empathy for the common people, by considerations of the welfare of the people One could then establish, first, the different layers (or levels) of decision-making in the interest of the people, and note the priorities of action at different levels (or tiers) of decision-making The obvious answer lies in decentralisation, in guaranteeing 'employment' to the people willing to work, and deploying the available workforce to areas of action where their vital interests are concerned, like real capital formation in the rural areas to build infrastructure, for land improvement, irrigation, drainage, *et al*

Does such a polity imply a weak Centre? One should not think so A human body with strong limbs, with all the vital organs performing well, is still controlled by the human brain, but the brain does *not*—it cannot—order the functioning of the blood cells, of diverse vital organs of the body The same applies for a geographic entity wherein a nation-state subsists It exists as an entity under the overall command of the Centre—like the brain in a human being—but it would be a bad day for any state to start ordering the lives of all individuals

But the argument of international finance capital—and its spokesmen, the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO—is that the concept of a nation-state is now *passé* The world is truly 'global' Never mind that in practice, *no* developed country wants to give up its own independent status as a nation-state, or even to refrain from using quantitative restrictions on the imports from developing countries under one excuse or the other What is good for the goose is not good for the gander But, for the present, let us merely watch from the sidelines what happens to the Maastricht Treaty and to the European Union over the next few years

The argument (of the exponents of 'reform') concerning the "market" *versus* the state is a futile one Its genesis goes back to F A Von Hayek who was frightened by the excessive centralisation of all authority by the state in the then Soviet Union The apologists for the "free market" feel that *any* state is certain to be run by certain vested interests, they seem to forget that the same vested interests cannot only control the market but also take a position—in the name of law and order, that all state institutions should merely protect the same vested interests in the name of "law and order" Change is the law of nature, but the protagonists of the free market system forget they are only arguing for the *status quo* being maintained by the market system in an unequal society

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IT is in the above context that one needs to discuss the issues of federal politics, of the institutions necessary for a successful polity which can promote a successful economy The latter is not possible without the former Equally, a polity can be successful only if it helps promote a successful economy

The Chief Minister of Rajasthan, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, had stated in his opening address at the seminar that "there should be a consensus on the National Economic Policy so that everything is transparent" Regrettably, lack of transparency remains a problem in all governmental actions even to this day And, one should add that in the realm of economics, transparency does *not* imply, for instance, the *show* of competitive bidding in a situation of oligopoly, transparency implies recognition of the oligopoly, and transparent efforts to beat down oligopoly Transpose the word oligarchy for oligopoly in the realm of politics, and you have the long-term solution to India's problems today ■

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CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS (OCTOBER 19-25, 1997)

NATIONAL

October 19

- After a two-hour meeting at Lucknow with Bahujan Samajwadi Party (BSP) leaders, MPs, and MLCs, former CM of UP Ms Mayawati announces their decision to pull out of the coalition with BJP and gives a formal letter conveying the decision to Governor Romesh Bhandari The 22 BSP Ministers in the coalition submit their resignation to the Governor
- The UP Governor asks BJP Chief Minister Kalyan Singh to prove his majority in the House on October 21
- Gujarat CM Shankarsinh Vaghela addresses a press conference in New Delhi and warns the Congress that withdrawal of support to his government would lead to the installation of a BJP Government
- Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral inaugurates an international conference on investment in Jammu & Kashmir at the Sher-e-Kashmir International Centre, Srinagar and says the Centre was considering an insurance policy for all foreign investors interested in setting up industries in J & K which is fast returning to normalcy
- Prime Minister Gujral indicates that the Centre may reimburse the security-related expenditure incurred by Jammu & Kashmir during the past eight years

October 20

- BJP succeeds in splitting the Congress and the Janata Dal in the UP legislature BJP State President Rajnath Singh claims "we will get a comfortable majority" (on October 21) and foretells that BSP and non-BJP parties will create pandemonium in the House to prevent Chief Minister Kalyan Singh from proving his majority
- Congress withdraws support to the Shankarsinh Vaghela minority government in Gujarat
- Prime Minister Gujral delays and finally cancels his one-day visits to Germany and France in view of the political developments in UP
- BJP spokesman Yashwant Sinha says his party demands fresh elections in Gujarat so that the people give their verdict
- Eight Afghan nationals, who were trapped by the Indian security forces when they sneaked into Kashmir, alongwith four Pakistanis and three local Kashmiris lay down arms at Srinagar before Union Home Minister Indrajit Gupta and J & K Chief Minister Dr Farooq Abdullah

October 21

- Unprecedented scenes of violence with 45 persons injured, 14 of them seriously, find the Opposition chased out of the UP Assembly with 222 "legislators" left to vote and express confidence in the BJP Ministry which has an effective strength of 177 in a House of 425
- UP Governor Romesh Bhandari sends five reports, videotapes of violence in the House photos and reports of two observers sent by him in the House, to make a strong case for the dissolution of the Assembly
- Later in the day, reportedly after seven hours of discussion, the Union Cabinet recommends to the President that the UP Assembly be dissolved and President's Rule be imposed in the State
- Gujarat CM Shankarsinh Vaghela is given a week's time bv Governor K P Singh to prove his majority in the House on or before October 28
- Special Judge V B Gupta of the CBI Court in New Delhi "finds no material to frame charges" against former Railway Minister C K Jaffar Sharief in the Jain *hawala* case and discharges him along with co accused B R Jain, K Jain, N K Jain and J K Jain
- Dr Daisaku Ikeda, President of the Buddhist Society Soka Gakkai International, delivering a lecture on "A New Humanism" at the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation in New Delhi, opines that taking a macroscopic look "we see that China, India and the US will play a central role in the twentyfirst Century"

October 22

- President K R Narayanan returns for reconsideration the Cabinet recommendation to impose President's Rule in Uttar Pradesh
- Accepting the opinion of Union Home Minister Indrajit Gupta, concurred by the Attorney General and the Solicitor General of India, that the court is sure to strike down the decision to impose President's Rule in UP, the Union Cabinet revokes its earlier recommendation and decides not to sent it a second time to the President
- United Front leaders, including those of the Left, point out that a quick action on last Sunday itself would have saved the credibility of the Gujral Government
- Gujarat CM Shankarsinh Vaghela tells reporters in Gandhinagar that he was willing to discuss the question of change in leadership of the Rashtriya Janata Party
- Sandalwood and ivory smuggling don Veerappan releases the six forest officials taken hostage by him fourteen days ago Karnataka and Tamil Nadu give Veerappan two weeks to surrender before the two governments intensify their joint hunt for him

October 23

- Samajwadi Party General-Secretary Amar Singh criticises the United Front, the Janata Dal and the PM, saying the UF has diluted its commitment to secularism, the dithering and inaction exposed the "political failure" of Gujral and the UF constituents were "busy fighting the Samajwadi Party and the Congress, especially in North India"
- Congress Legislature Party leader in UP Pramod Tiwari says he will challenge the Congress split in court as

the leader of the breakaway group admitted before the voting that he had split for power-sharing and the Chief Minister said he would "think positively about including these legislators in his Ministry"

- Defence Secretary Ajit Kumar decides against participating in the annual meeting of India-US Defence Policy Group in Washington, reportedly because the US had not designated an official of equal rank to co-chair the meeting
- BJP leaders in UP root for Governor Romesh Bhandari saying that he has no moral authority to continue in office after the President rejected his report and refused to impose President's Rule in the State
- West Bengal CM Jyoti Basu tells the press in Guwahati that he would have no objection if the tea companies shift their headquarters to Assam as demanded by the AGP Government He adds further that any attempt by the corporate sector to bypass the State Government even with the help of the Centre and to have connections with the extremists was unthinkable

October 24

- Union Minister for Home Affairs Indrajit Gupta is reported to have told his colleagues in the UF Government that action must be taken against UP Governor Romesh Bhandari for his unconstitutional role in the State's political crisis
- Bahujan Samajwadi Party leader and former Chief Minister of UP Ms Mayawati writes to President K R Narayanan seeking his intervention in the manner in which Kalyan Singh Government proved its majority in the UP Assembly
- Union Ministry of personnel, public grievances and pensions announces that there will now be no separate standards of evaluation for SC/ST candidates for promotion
- In a shootout inside the Tis Hazari Courts Complex in Delhi two persons are shot dead and one seriously injured The police suspect this is a case of inter-gang rivalry Lawyers boycotted the Courts in protest against "inadequate security"
- Three persons are killed and nearly two dozen wounded as a bomb explodes in a passenger bus in Srinagar (J & K)

October 25

- CBI makes a major breakthrough in the Urea Scam case by tracking down Brazilian dealer A E Pinto with the help of the London police Pinto was, according to intelligence reports, the principal broker in the Urea deal
- Addressing the second All India Conference of Minorities Forum, Defence Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav warns UF leaders not to take him for granted If the UF leaders insisted on a campaign berating him, be says, he will be compelled to umask all of them
- West Bengal CM Jyoti Basu says the Centre's economic policy has benefited only 10 to 15 per cent of the people while the vast majority are confronted by stagnation or deteriorating living standard
- Assam Government refuses to hand over to the CBI the probe into the alleged funding of militants by Tata Tea
- General Officer Commanding Maj Gen S S Chabal tells reporters in Rajouri (J & K) that Pakistan is running eightysix training camps in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir and in their own country for terrorists to foment disturbances in India

INTERNATIONAL

October 19

- Speaking at a banquet in Johannesburg to honour former President of Tanzania Julius Nyerere, President Nelson Mandela accuses United States of arrogance and racism for mounting protests from Washington against his forthcoming visit to Libya
- Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, the divorced wife of the President of South Africa defies her party, the African National Congress (ANC), and calls for a referendum on capital punishment which she wants to be re-introduced as a deterrent to rampant crime
- Israeli President Ezer Weizman postpones his visit to China as, according to the Jerusalem daily *Haaretz*, he fears the Benjamin Netanyahu Government might be toppled because of domestic problems and crisis in the peace process
- Pakistan's Supreme Court opens inquiry against Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and calls the two Opposition MPs to testify before Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah about their charges that Sharif had pressurised banks and irregularities have been committed in a wheat import contract
- Sri Lanka Defence Ministry claims to have killed 100 LTTE cadres and sunk seven boats in a five-hour long sea battle

October 20

- Damaging new evidence in the campaign finance affair turns up in one of the videotapes of US President Bill Clinton's "coffee parties" which the White House released on subpoenas from the Congressional panel The tape shows President Clinton explaining how he could circumvent legal restrictions limiting donations to individuals to $ 1000 "We realised we could raise money in 20,000, 50,000, 100,000, if we run these ads through the Democratic Party," the President is heard explaining
- President Boris Yeltsin of Russia meets Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, Speaker of the State Duma Gennady Seleznyov and Chairman of the Federation Council Yegor Stroyev in a bid to ward off voting on the no-confidence motion initiated last week by the Communists, the largest group in the Duma and which is to be voted on October 22
- South African Foreign Minister Alfred Nzo tells reporters in Cairo that "South Africa and many countries believe

that the regime of sanctions against Libya really ought to be done away with"

- US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Thomas Pickering tells reporters in Islamabad that he spoke to the Pakistani authorities about Harkat-ul-Ansar, the militant outfit put on the terrorists list by the US, and secured a commitment to take action against such groups

October 21

- United States announces their successful testing of its Mid-Infrared Advanced Chemical Laser (MIRACL) whose beam shot through the atmosphere and destroyed an aging Air Force satellite orbiting 420 kms above the earth
- Russia warns the US that "an anti-satellite weapon could greatly change the strategic situation" and it could lead to a new international arms race
- President Mugabe of Zimababwe says he will ask Britain at the Commomwealth Conference to pay for five million hectares of land which he proposes to buy from whites in order to carry out land reforms
- US yields to French and Russian demands and agrees to delay for six months the imposition of new sanctions against Iraq which would apply automatically unless the UN Special Commission Chairman Richard Butler certifies in his next report on April 11, 1998 that Iraq was cooperating
- Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed urges the opposition to end its boycott and return to Parliament in the next session, starting November 2, to pass tough anti-terrorist laws

October 22

- In the wake of the economic crises, after posting some of the world's highest growth rates in the '85-95' decade, Thailand reeling under the weight of plunging currency value (39 10 baht to a US dollar), half the country's financial institutions closed because of bad debts and an estimated 100,000 having lost their jobs Prime Minister Chaowalit Yongehaiyudh thinks of clamping an emergency but is warned by Army Commander Gen Chettha Thanajaro not to do so to stop peaceful protests
- US President Bill Clinton asks contributors at a $ 1 5 million gala, "Give me a Democratic Senate to work with"
- US launches its coveted visa Lottery for the 55,000 permits up for grabs Of these 23024 will go to Europeans, 21409 to Africans from different countries India, China and Mexico are excluded altogether as more than 50,000 of them immigrate into the US through other channels like family reunion programme

October 23

- Leader of the Harkat-ul-Ansar Fazal-ur-Rahman Khalid, reacting to the US designating his outfit as "terrorist" and the reported Pakistani commitment to take action against them, says in Rawalpindi that "anybody who tries to confront us should be ready for a war"
- Chief Justice of Pakistan Sajjad Ali Shah summons records of some long-pending land distribution cases involving Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif
- Pakistan Government pleads to the Supreme Court that the hearing of the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) case regarding covert financial support to political parties be held in camera
- President Nelson Mandela of South Africa respects the UN ban on flights to Libya and travels by road from Tunisia and arrives in Tripoli to a hero's welcome

October 24

- British Prime Minister Tony Blair meets Prime Minister I K Gujral before the inauguration of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) and reiterates that Britain has no intention of mediating in the Kashmir issue which has to be solved by India and Pakistan
- Prime Minister Gujral speaking on the opening day of CHOGM says "Many developing countries are being asked to adjust to the process of globalisation at a pace and in conditions that are not of their choosing " He says globalisation will succeed only if it is equitable and just
- British Prime Minister Tony Blair asks Commonwealth leaders "to admire Britain for what we are, not what we have been"
- Speaking in Washington before the Senate Sub-Committee on Asia and the Pacific, US Assistant Secretary of State Karl Inderfurth says Washington believes that both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia could do more to influence the Taliban to move towards a peaceful settlement to the Afghan crisis
- Commonwealth ministers rule out fresh sanctions against Nigeria but agree to an oil embargo in a year's time if the West African country fails to restore democracy The country remains suspended from the 54-member organisation

October 25

- World Watch Institute, a non-government think-tank in Washington, says Pakistan's ISI diverted to militants in Kashmir three million Kalashnikovs supplied by the US for Afghan Mujahideen to fight against the Soviets and six to nine billion dollars worth of arms were sold in the north-west frontier and the money was channeled to drug trafficking
- Prime Minister Gujral meets with Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in Edinburgh Pakistan Foreign Secretary Shamshad Ahmad says the two Prime Ministers agreed to operationalise the mechanism for the setting up of working groups
- US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, addressing a gathering at the Catholic University in Washington, dubbs the LTTE of Sri Lanka as "Hindu rebels" and, denouncing barbaric crimes and gross violations of human rights in the name of religion, says the central conflict in the world today is between those who believe in law and those who are driven by ambition and greed
- A new Commonwealth Investment Fund for South Asia is launched in Edinburgh in the presence of the British Prime Minister and some SAARC leaders
- King Narodom Sihanouk of Cambodia left for Beijing after his two-month effort in reconcile the warring factions failed to fructify
- The case against Asif Ali Zardari, husband of former Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, and 17 others for conspiring to murder her brother Mir Murtaza Bhutto, is transferred to an anti-terrorist court as, according to the trial judge "it has an element of terrorism" ■

SUMIT India at Edinburgh CHOGM

(Continued from page 6)

progress towards democracy (as it has called for elections under the prevailing military regime in Lagos in October 1998)—the final decision on the fate of Nigeria being left to the next summit slated for 1999 in South Africa However, the CHOGM threatened the Nigerian regime with a series of measures (including embargo on export of arms) even before October next in case the MAG found its progress towards democracy unsatisfactory (These steps were, however, unable to satisfy human rights crusaders like the celebrated Nigerian writer, Wole Soyinka, and Indian legal luminary Soli Sorabjee)

The declaration's strong condemnation of "terrorism in all its manifestations which destabilise the political, economic and social order of sovereign states" was an endorsement of the Indian stand on the issue voiced by Gujral in his keynote address at the CHOGM opening The document called upon states to "enact laws to make punishable acts of conspiracy to commit terrorist offences within their jurisdiction" The reference to a "comprehensive legal framework" in this context was not to the liking of some delegates, including those from Pakistan, who pressed for invoking the UN Charter, but they had to beat a retreat in the face of a powerful intervention by the Sri Lankan President, Chandrika Kumaratunga, who denounced not only terrorist acts but also those harbouring terrorists The linkages between terrorism, illegal trafficking in drugs and arms, as well as money-laundering—as mentioned in Gujral's speech—were also recognised in the declaration

A Pakistani move to get Kashmir included in the document was thwarted from the side of India with the backing of Sri Lanka and Bangladesh who resented the depiction of the region such as to give the impression that South Asia was a war zone

However, the Indian support to Palestine's application for membership did not bear fruit with the view that it would be prudent to wait for Palestine's emergence as a sovereign state prevailing over the call for the acceptance of its candidature But here too the South Asian states, particularly India and Pakistan, displayed extraordinary unanimity

◆

As far as the bilateral talks were concerned, they went off exceedingly well from the Indian standpoint Tony Blair told Gujral that he had no intention of "mediating in Kashmir" and instead sought to shift the focus on Indo-British economic ties thus distancing from his Foreign Secretary's controversial pronouncements in Islamabad (Significantly Robin Cook, in his interview with David Frost on the BBC, himself denied having made such "public" statements) Gujral's meeting with the Queen also passed off well and he on his part went to the extent of congratulating her on her golden wedding anniversary this year

The only spanner in the works was the report in the pro-Labour newspaper, *The Observer*, that India was seeking the recall of the British High Commissioner, Sir David Gore-Booth, for his role in queering the pitch during the Queen's visit No doubt the Indian officials were incensed by Sir Gore-Booth's undiplomatic statements at the time but the PM denied having asked for his recall However, it was quite interesting to find Sir Gore-Booth ruffled by the report and requesting the Indian media to print the denial This was a different High Commissioner who had finally been forced to shed his arrogance

As for the Gujral-Nawaz Sharif talks, they continued for seventyfive minutes in an atmosphere of predictable bonhomie at the Caledonian Hotel where the Pakistan PM was staying In the end it was decided to look beyond Kashmir and on the one hand increase the present scale of issuance of visas by both the states, and on the other jointly hold seminars on agriculture, public health, urban development, environment with the participation of students, researchers, educationists and intellectuals from both the countries to mark the golden jubilee of their independence

Predictably too the deadlock on the issue of selecting the best mechanism to discuss Kashmir could not be broken at the Indo-Pak summit However, what was signficant was that the two sides agreed to have a meeting of the two Foreign Secretaries at Edinburgh which duly took place in the afternoon of October 25 The discussions, according to the Joint Press Statement issued after the meeting, "were held in a positive and constructive manner with a view to facilitating an early resumption of the official talks" (which were adjourned in New Delhi in September last following differences on the issue) Whatever the skeptics and hardliners on both sides may conclude, any dispassionate observer conscious of the complexities of Indo-Pak relationship would note this as an advance by drawing the contrast with the frozen state of affairs during Benazir Bhutto's tenure as the head of the Pakistan Government

Gujral's talks with the President of Sri Lanka and the Prime Minister of Bangladesh were productive as well with the Indian PM backing Chandrika's devolution package to restore peace in the troubled island-state and extending support to the one-day meeting mooted by Hasina within the regional SAARC framework at Dhaka next month

◆

Overall from the Indian standpoint what was achieved at the Edinburgh CHOGM and the various meetings held during the Summit were not inconsequential in the least The large number of NGOs who had converged at Edinburgh when the Summit was under way also mirrored the changing face of the Commonwealth encompassing as it does as many as 54 countries today—something that impelled Chandrika Kumaratunga to observe at the Queen's banquet

> It was fifty years ago, that the process of transforming the British Empire into the evolving Commonwealth of Nations commenced, with the gaining of independence by India and Pakistan That momentous beginning provided both an inspiration and an impetus for the world-wide process of decolonisation which we witnessed in the ensuing years That we in the Commonwealth are today a microcosm of that larger world is merely illustrative of the scale of an empire on which the sun supposedly never set

The Sri Lankan President's speech was noteworthy also for her other observations "If any group of countries in today's world has a propensity to come together in a cooperative and mutually supportive relationship, surely we in the Commonwealth do," she claimed adding with a remarkable blend of wit and candour

> The very nature of today's world should impel us then to concentrate our minds on such a prospect For in the world at large, we are now well embarked upon an unipolar international order, driven by a process of economic globalisation of which the most visible characteristic is the dominance of transnational corporations and the inequality of benefit for the rich and the poor Viewed in this context Ma'am, one might entertain some reservation about that ancient proposition, which holds that "the meek shall inherit the earth" It behoves us in the Commonwealth, therefore, to bend our best efforts towards achieving very understanding and accommodation, between states of very disparate resources, which alone could create a truly level playing field, which is not so high that some of us cannot climb on to participate in the game

And the Malaysian Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir, had this to convey

> Some of us may be prepared for the borderless world But most of us will not be We in South-East Asia have seen how anarchic a globalised world can be Already we hear of new philosophies such as 'Greed is Great' People who rob the poor can pose as philantrophist and receive accolade This is an unfair world Many of us have struggled hard and even shed blood in order to be independent When borders are down and the world becomes a single entity, independence can become meaningless All will be equal of course but the cunning and the rich will be more equal than the rest

Such forthright pronouncements were seldom heard in previous Commonwealth meetings It was striking also for Nelson Mandela to go out of his way at his press conference and laud India for standing firm on issues such as the Western attitude to the South African President's trip to Libya He declined to give any advice to India on such matters adding

> You give advice to a country if it is faltering or is unable to give a swift and decisive leadership on issues As far as I have followed India's policy, they are with us on the issue I have no doubt that if any one tried to dictate to them, they would tell him to get off

An extraordinary tribute came from Wole Soyinka too during the CHOGM Responding to a query from this journalist on what he expected from the "country that describes itself as the world's largest democracy" in the struggle for democracy in Nigeria, the renowned writer said

> From India I expect a very solid, principled stand India has undergone partition from its original state, it's undergoing crisis between the Hindus and the Muslims sometimes of the most alarming kind, it's undergone scandals like the Bofors scandal which led to the resignation or defeats of Prime Ministers and leading politicians But the process goes on No military person has come and said This country is too corrupt—so I am taking over Or there is too much crisis in Uttar Pradesh, there is too much religious tension, the Kashmir issue is not yet resolved—only the military can resolve it Who are they? They have got only one head apiece like the rest of us here But the democratic process is allowed to stumble on because it is only by this process of error-correction and finally by the judgement of the people can the country progress, not by the arbitrary imposition of those who have actually committed treason by seizing the resources of the nation and using those resources to oppress the people

One was taken aback by his deep awareness of the Indian reality and the way in which it is able to protect the candle of democracy in the face of rising storm of growing complexities threatening the nation-state

It is the totality of all these which turned the Edinburgh CHOGM into a memorable experience Whatever the achievements of this Summit in terms of giving a definite shape to the Commonwealth's changing contours—and these would become transparent only in the coming days—there is no doubt that it restored the prominent position of India among the developing countries, something which New Delhi had lost sometime ago due to its own indifference to Third World causes ■

Posted at CPSO in New Delhi on October 31/November 1, 1997 **Delhi Postal REGD No DL-11037/97**
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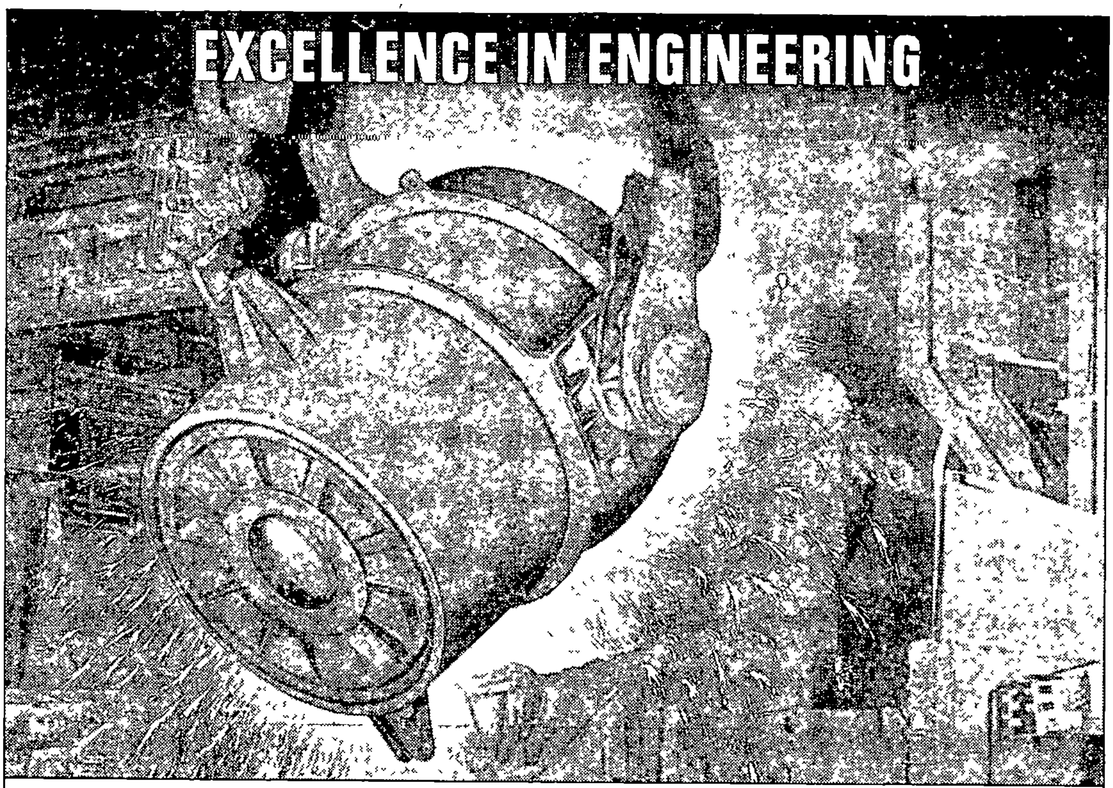

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Edited and published by Sumit Chakravartty *for* PERSPECTIVE PUBLICATIONS PRIVATE LTD, 145/1D, Shahpur Jat (First Floor), (Near Asiad Village), New Delhi-110049 *Printed at* NEW DELHI PRINTERS, 20/7 Old Market, West Patel Nagar, New Delhi-110008 *Editor* Sumit Chakravartty *Editorial Adviser* Nikhil Chakravartty *Manager* Jasjit Kay Nagra

Mainstream

VOL XXXV No 51 November 29,1997 Rs 7

Crisis at the Centre : Need of the Hour

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

Behind the Congress Misadventure

PRADIP GUPTA

L'Affaire Tata Tea in North-East

KULDIP NAYAR

Indians in Africa

M.R. NARAYAN SWAMY

A Tragedy of Errors : Review of J.N. Dixit's *Assignment Colombo*

SHARAD PATIL'S RESPONSE TO D. BANDYOPADHYAY'S SPECIAL ARTICLE ON TWO DECADES OF LEFT FRONT RULE IN WEST BENGAL

Need of the Hour

As the stalemate at the Centre continues with the Lok Sabha Speaker forced to adjourn the Lower House sine die in a bid to help sort out, outside Parliament, the problems between the ruling combination and its principal supporting party, it is most unfortunate, nay tragic, that none of the established political parties have till now thought of actively intervening to break the impasse placing the nation's interests above subjective considerations

In the circumstances it was quite logical for the most experienced political leader in the country—West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu (who is far senior in politics than the national leader the BJP strives to market as the 'only saleable Prime Ministerial product', Atal Behari Vajpayee)—to call for fresh parliamentary elections and seek a new mandate from the public as the only way out of the crisis But the problem is that there is no guarantee that the verdict of such a mid-term poll would be any different from that of the 1996 elections no single party being able to secure an absolute majority in the Lok Sabha Furthermore, can the country afford elections at short intervals? This question has been raised by none other than the Chief Election Commissioner At the same time cutting across party lines a large number of first-time MPs have come together and requested the President not to dissolve the Lower House, they have also set up a forum to articulate their views This being the situation the entire United Front is now compelled to think anew and do everything possible to save the arrangement worked out by the UF with the Congress after the 1996 elections without allowing themselves to be swayed by subjective considerations

In essence what this means is that they would have to comprehend the intricacies of and develop the culture of coalition politics as was highlighted in these columns last week However, as yet there are few in both the UF and the Congress who are able to realise the imperative need of such a move Nevertheless, one hopeful sign is that among those few a handful have even at this late hour started working overtime to salvage the 1996 experiment without giving any quarter to pernicious sectarianism which was at the root of the CPI-M die-hards preventing Jyoti Basu from assuming the office of the Prime Minister defying the national consensus on that score one and a half years ago

As for the Congress, it must be underlined that its own action of making the "ouster" of the DMK from the Gujral Government the precondition for extending support to the UF Ministry has landed itself in a soup However, here too different Congress stalwarts were speaking in different voices Thus while Pranab Mukherjee spoke of throwing out the DMK from the Central dispensation, Vijay Bhaskar Reddy demanded expulsion of the DMK from the Front forgetting the fact that the Congress had no business to comment on whatever happened within the UF So the UF constituents too had no alternative but to harden their attitude against the demand to remove the DMK from the UF Ministry at the Centre

Initially the Congress leaders were under the impression that with the Rajiv assassination issue having once again come to the focus of national

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attention, the party would be able to derive the maximum electoral mileage out of the Jain Commission's observations against the DMK, VP Singh, Chandra Shekhar *et al* with Sonia Gandhi spearheading the party's election campaign and emerging as its saviour Although one section within the country's premier political organisation—and a sizeable one at that—was well aware that even this would not be a simple task and appeared sceptical of the calculations of the Sonia group inside the party, it could not muster sufficient confidence and courage to assert itself in the face of the vocal minority, that is, the Sonia brigade's demand to snap ties with the UF on the DMK issue and face the electorate under Sonia Gandhi's leadership It was the abject surrender on the part of party President Sitaram Kesri (when he urged the assassinated Prime Minister's widow to assume the party leadership in his place) that further emboldened the Sonia group to go on a rampage The result was there for all to see the minority wing—undoubtedly enjoying Sonia's blessings—held the entire Congress (and also the country) to ransom and engineered artificial instability at the Centre on a virtual non-issue In the process the standing and image of India in the world has suffered a heavy blow and the President's legitimate apprehensions in this regard must be taken due note of

◆

WHAT none of the Congress leaders of the various shades of opinion was able to assess was the explosive nature of the Jain Commission report, and how it could boomerang on the party as a whole What is most objectionable in the report is the sweeping remark

> the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi would not have been possible the way it materialised without the deep nexus of LTTE operatives with Tamils in Tamil Nadu

Such a statement has the potential of creating a North-South cleavage since by this Justice Milap Chand Jain has sought to cast aspersions on Tamils in general as a community The DMK is exploiting this to its advantage and in this backdrop the Sonia factor would not be of any use for the Congress Moreover, it is now as clear as daylight that it was the Congress Government which had suppressed the Thakkar Commission report on Indira Gandhi's assassination—and instead rewarded the person against whom the Commission had pointed the "needle of suspicion" by making him a member of the party's highest policy-making body Besides, both Rajiv Gandhi and his ally in Tamil Nadu, the AIADMK, had gone out of their way to placate the LTTE in the not-too-distant past extending to it every form of material (military) support, and Rajiv himself even tried to open channels of communication with the Tamil Tigers taking the DMK's assistance much after the bloody LTTE-IPKF clashes had turned into a veritable war, albeit a localised one Hence to single out the DMK for association with the LTTE and accuse it of connivance with the latter in bringing about the young former PM's untimely and tragic demise happened to be the height of irresponsibility As all these are sinking into public consciousness it is becoming extremely difficult for the Congress to justify its position on the issue Gujral's letter to the Congress chief—drafted by the sober elements within the UF—has also placed the Congress leadership in a quandary as these lines are being written Currently the leaders are by and large—excluding non-entities like Arjun Singh hanging on to Sonia*ji*'s sari—in a position to understand that their own stand in the matter would far from improving the Congress' electoral prospects adversely affect the party's chances at the hustings and could well reduce it to an even more insignificant force in the national arena

In the circumstances the Congress is finding itself in an unenviable situation at a time when attempts are afoot to split the body so that one section—headed by Sharad Pawar—can forge an understanding with the BJP and share power in an alternative government at the Centre If that happens then it would deal a fatal blow not just to the Congress as a viable entity but to the whole concept of the necessity of secular unity to keep the communal forces at bay And the actual victims of such a development would be the secular forces everywhere—both inside the Congress and the UF as well as those outside

Thus the need of the hour is to salvage the arrangement worked out after the 1996 elections It is good that influential sections within the Left who have not totally succumbed to sectarian prejudices have realised the danger and begun operations to ward it off even at this late stage But it needs to be emphasised that merely salvaging the 1996 arrangement is not sufficient The younger elements within the Congress and the UF must immediately evolve the modalities for closer coordination among the two In this the Leftists within the Front have a pivotal role to play If they are able to do so then not only would the UF-Congress understanding secure a new lease of life, but it would also acquire added strength and durability

It is noteworthy that such an exercise has been belatedly undertaken by responsible elements in both the camps On the success of this endeavour would depend the success of coalition politics on the national plane

November 26 S C

Behind the Congress Misadventure

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

Now that the insensate pandemonium has led the people of India to wonder what their elected leaders are up to, they are expected to realise the gravity of the strong words used by the Speaker in adjourning sine die the Lok Sabha It is not every day that the Speaker who is supposed to be the custodian of the dignity and prestige of the House, had to warn that the members were committing "the mindless mockery of the people who have returned this House and an appalling denigration of the very institution of Parliament which I shall not permit" This was the basic reason for his unprecedented decision of adjournment of the House sine die In the midst of the ugly demonstrations that were taking place in the majestic mansion that houses our Parliament This has indeed been an unfortunate blot on the fair name of our Parliament in which billingsgate might have excelled the conduct of our elected representatives

Keyed up in their unworthy pandemonium, they seem to have forgotten even their elementary duties Not very far from them took place the cold-blooded tragedy when an overcrowded school bus broke the parapet and plunged into the water, with a very large number of innocent boys who lost their lives in the swift flow of the Yamuna Even those from the media who went to cover this tragedy could not hold back their tears How insensitive our MPs have become would be clear from the fact that not one of them bothered to go and console the bereaved families who had lost their children These MPs who are supposed to be the custodian of the conscience of the nation have individually become so dehumanised that they did not care to console the grieving parents Who knows, among those who lost their lives in the Yamuna were not those who would one day have risen to lead their people and entered Parliament which their forebears have so miserably besmirched!

Not that every one of our MPs has become so hardened in their sentiments The Congress members have been busy because they want to take the Jain report with its half-baked views as the means by which they could capitalise on the assassination of their leader, Rajiv Gandhi Apart from the fact that such an ulterior motive does not have to inspire each and every MP who behaved in an unruly manner, one has to take into account the fact that the present Parliament could witness the decline and death of the premier political organisation in the country It is an open secret now that the Congress party is actually split, and that has been the main reason why all the pandemonium has been taking place After the low-key cautious approach of the Congress President, Sitaram Kesri, it was known that they did not satisfy the leaders who wanted a "tougher" line and the result was the utter bedlam in Parliament, which the party whips belonging to the Congress did not care to control on the plea that they would not permit the DMK Ministers to continue in the government

For two days utter misadventure continued when it was realised that the Congress leadership was out of control As for one group it was reported to have a quiet pow-wow with the BJP However, it was not sure that it would be able to muster about 80 or so, which was believed to be whatever was required to get the majority It was reported that the BJP was ready to hand-over the Prime Ministership to the rump Congress, so that it could be saved from the stigma of a communal government

When it was found that this was not possible to achieve—because as many as 80 of the Congress were not willing to cross over unless and until they were promised to be rewarded for this ugly operation—then the Congress leaders could sit down and be chastened The threat, however, has remained and Sitaram Kesri has had a rather uncomfortable time It was obvious that the plan was to produce the so-called "ultimatum" letter to Prime Minister Gujral and with that to tell the President that the Congress had withdrawn its support to the United Front government However, the President made it clear that as per the Bommai judgement of the Supreme Court, he would be guided not by the so-called letters, but what would happen on the floor of the House This means that the Congress would have to bring all its Lok Sabha MPs to the House and be counted This would have meant that the Congress would have to come in one and whole Speaker Sangma's sine-die adjournment enabled them to collect the votes and thereby the BJP plan was scotched

The return to sanity on the part of the Lok Sabha MPs belonging to the Congress in particular was thus brought about by the stand of the Speaker and the unambiguous assertion of the President that he would be guided by the proceedings of the House alone and nothing else This made it difficult for a very large number of Congress members to cross over while the firm stand of the United Front that it would not let down the DMK members resulted in this change to sanity How long this would last is yet to be seen

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MEANWHILE, the prestige of the investigation report has been staggeringly brought down by the pathetic performance of Justice Jain The ATC report on the Jain report has made it clear how hollow this had been It has to be realised that in the eyes of the public, an investigation under the Commissions of Enquiry Act is held in great esteem This, however, has been virtually given the go-by in the Jain report by its internal weaknesses The reckless charges he has made could not possibly be sustained by the facts of the matter, while it has helped to inflame a section of the public It is quite openly stated that the Jain report was made for the advantage of the Congress Otherwise its weaknesses would never have been detected Compared to the Verma report and the Thakkar report (which was for all practical purposes withheld from Parliament), it is clear that the Jain report is frankly biased on the side of the present Congress Inevitably, this has provoked many who would perhaps have preferred to keep quiet

An incidental byproduct of the present excitement has been the idea of Sonia Gandhi undertaking campaign for the Congress This would have been disastrous for her and for the Congress Out of certain public deference, there has so far been no attacks on her personally However, if she chose to go in for an election campaign against those opposed to the Congress, then this would have been taken to the no-holds-barred level In that contest, Sonia is certainly more vulnerable than anybody else If she wanted to keep her respectable distance, it would have been wiser for her to maintain that distant level Those who think of *"Sonia lao"* must realise that this could possibly be no way of *"Congress bachhao"* Rather such a foolhardy step would have hastened the ignomi-nous end of the national organisation in the year when the people of India have been celebrating the golden jubilee of the country's independence ■

IMPRESSIONS

CPI-M promoting Prudery or Prudience?

I.K. SHUKLA

A piece in *The Hindu* (October 10, 1997) by Hasan Suroor entitled "CPI-M Divided Over Links with Sahmat" details the weired goings-on in this institutional "radical" party over issues concerning ideology Briefly stated, Sahmat is adjudged 'guilty' of defending Maqbool Fida Hussain with respect to Saraswati in the nude, done nearly two decades ago, but uncannily resurrected recently in a fit of fundamentalist passion, the neo-Hindu variety The CPI-M has assumed the role of the Fidei Defensor (the defender of the faith), one of the titles of the British sovereign Marx has a word for this malaise, not constricted by this specific example, and touching upon the Leftists fideism

This new incarnation of "socialist realism" needs closer scrutiny Bending over backwards to adopt and anoint the "popular" platitudes, and thus boost the obscurantist and the occulusive, in order to win over the plummy vote-bank in the cow belt, is the most sleazy kind of politicking in the open season of unprincipled shadow boxing It has all the appearance of "humility", that is, 'learning' from the people It has all the theatrics of "penance", that is, cleansing of the ideological soul by pandering to the vulgar and the vacuous, as if making up for the monumental neglect of the "masses" over the decades past This stagy stridency, pretending to be deferentially attuned to the prevailing fashions and obsessions and thus going with the flow, is tantamount to heralding the dark ages characterised not just by thought control but also by thoughtlessness This is a brazen assault on sense, and a blatant insult to sensibility

I enclose a snapshot of a Japanese Saraswati in the nude, a statue in Enoshima (See p 6) Whether it was inspired by the Hindu myth of *vinavadini* or the Roman Muses or Minerva, or is similar in inspiration, need not detain us here What is common to the concept is the conflation in the goddess of both sense and sensibility, sensuality and spirituality, learning and lyrics, scholarship and aesthetics

A pause here is in order It is not necessary to look for the nude versions in mythology of the goddess of arts and wisdom What is pertinent and imperative is to look into what Jung called his depth psychology —the Organic Psyche, an amalgam of both the conscious and the unconscious, of both the angelic and the daemonic It is useful to remember that Rilke did not want his demons exorcised lest his angels too should disappear They are complementary vis-a-vis creativity Purging one or the other is to court sterility and creative coma Let us sideline the "defense" of M F Hussain for a while Artistic empathy can easily unravel the 'mystery' so-called of a *digambara* Saraswati All heavens, all directions are her apparel She is vested in the cosmic vastness both spatially and temporally Cosmic consciousness in all its ramifications is its costume Every artistic endeavor is just one peeling of the countless layers, innumerable aspects, of that colossal and inchoate form (vestment) As the artist probes his inner world and lays it bare he rips off one more fold of the mystery, strips it of one more camouflage The artist exposes to naked perception both one more vision of the mystery, and one more corner of the subconscious (his own) and/or the collective unconscious (rarely wittingly) It is the striping of the psyche that the artist is engaged in, not in that of a god or goddess

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THAT a political party chose to issue a diktat in matters artistic smacks of the worst kind of condescension and crassness To put it very mildly, this is reversion to regimentation of the totalitarian kind, and negation of respect for complexity and individual integrity A political syndicate presuming to be the arbiter of art does serious damage both to art and politics It seems to have skipped the generous impulses of Gramsci and the grievous counter-revolution in Europe during the last decade most nonchalantly

The critical juncture chosen for this somersaul adds piquancy and pity to the whole sordid episode This aid and abetment offered to the saffron brigade could not have come at a more dangerous time The neo-Hindu bid for power, flagging and faltering, go the much needed ballast, in its hour of dire desperation And this, in the name of cultivating the "people", even while victimising them by wrapping them in the blanket of total darkness, and denying them autonomy, psychic and artistic Who will save them from the "saviors"? Who will enlighten them on correctness with deviants as docents?

Parliamentarism is open to pitfalls of unending compromises, the CPI-M being no exception But tha this 'consensus-building' can cross all limits of reason is astounding To pay such a high price for courting the electorate can, instead of enhancing its pol prospects, incrementally consign the party to ideological debility and permanent disability in terms of its appeal or usefulness to the masses, of whom it seems suddenly to have grown so solicitous, and that in a very dubious way

That Prof Irfan Habib, like so many others, is "guilty" in their calculus of piety, by dint o association with Sahmat, is quite logical A majo "crime" he is charged with, without being named as a signal culprit or arch opportunist, is his lspse in unwisely choosing his parents and relatives He seems ideologically diluted or contaminated by living under the same roof with uncles of different politica persuasions For ideological purity, ideally, living in the jungle would seem to be best

Putting blinkers on their own eyes is quite in character for the institutional Communist Parties Bu that they seek to subvert and brainwash the populace massively towards reaction and denial of reason is a major threat to progressive politics of all stripes Instead of having caution and discrimination for its guides it succumbed to divisive obfuscation and obsolescent obscurantism Long spell of power for a "radical" party historically has tended to its wea and tear Painful but true The unbelievable gall is to parade insensitivity as sensitivity In this reactionary formulation vis-a-vis art the media has played a fairly subliminal role The media moonshine on Teresa and Diana, a nun and a fairy, both cultivated and cultured as media angels, catering to its affluence and anchoring its phony pieties, seems to have rubbed off on the cultural apparatchiks irrespective of part affiliations

And it is salutary to recall the Japanese novelis Junichiro Tanazaki's novella in the 1960s titled *The Key* based on the husband's obsession with the wife's legs which he had never seen, thanks to the mores obtaining in that bastion of patriarchy and prudery This Japan is also the blessed land of the *geisha* for the same resaon Shall we learn the necessary lesson? ■

L'Affaire Tata Tea in North-East

PRADIP GUPTA

At last Jyoti Basu, the West Bengal Chief Minister, has struck the right chord Going by the past experience it is not, however, always expected that the octogenarian Marxist will talk sense (for example, his utterance after the rape and molestation of three women in Bantala that such incidents are not unheard of) But during his last tour of Assam the West Bengal Chief Minister just told what was expected of him He did not side with the industrial houses whom he has been fruitlessly trying to befriend for nearly a decade Instead Jyoti Basu said the Tata Tea Limited, among others, has committed a basic mistake by paying money to the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) and that it should not have kept the Asom Gana Parishad led State Government in the dark in the matter

His observations have come at the most appropriate time For the Tata Tea, in collaboration with the friends of the Tatas in politics and media, has unleashed an all-out campaign to water down its culpability in a dangerous act, that is, of aiding anti-national militants It is no one's business here to give the Asom Gana Parishad Government a clean chit In fact there are longstanding speculations about their direct connections with the ULFA But that does not exonerate the Tata Tea in spite of excuses from its friends like Sharad Pawar, Ram Jethmalani and C R Irani, the last one being the editor-in-chief of a mass circulated English daily

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LET us start from the top Who is primarily responsible for tackling militancy in the North-East? It is the Central Government Right now a combined operation against the militants is going on there under the leadership of the Army which comes under the Ministry of Defence. But the State Government has also an elaborate set-up to tackle law and order and it is only expected that the two will work in unison without any interloping by outside forces

But what have we seen in all these years? Readers, please keep in mind that the intelligence agencies, both of the Centre and the State, are devious organisations Their balance-sheets will show that they have done more harm to the country's interests than good Take, for instance, the RAW After the death of Mujibur Rahman in Bangladesh it organised many heavily armed units comprising Awami Leaguers who were mostly known as toughs and brigands in their own country These units were based in Meghalaya but controlled from the RAW office in Calcutta Their assigned task was to penetrate deep inside Bangladesh and carry out armed raids The brigands ultimately started loot, arson and rape How did the RAW's efforts pay in the long run? The relationship with President Zia soured and reached a new low The Awami League toughs failed to make any impact inside Bangladesh not to speak of toppling Zia Some of them made substantial money by looting banks Do you know a good amount of such looted money is still lying in a nationalised bank somewhere in North Bengal?

Now, the same unscrupulous activities by the intelligence agencies are going on in the North-Eastern part of India for a long time and the supine Central Government must be held responsible for it Approximately two years back Subir Roy, a high level employee of a tea company (not Tata Tea) was abducted by the ULFA in Assam A couple of days later he was suddenly released It is now an open secret that the company had heavily paid the militant outfit for Roy's release Since then this has become a common practice in Assam Didn't the Central Government, that is, its intelligence wing, know about such developments? The harsh truth is that it knew but chose to close its eyes If the State administration and political parties in Assam were hand in glove with the extremists then did the Central Government warn them or take punitive action? The answer is an emphatic 'no'

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THEN why did the Tata Tea repose such great faith in the Central Government whose intentions and ability to govern is open to suspicion It is no doubt correct that the AGP Government is no better Bhrigu Kumar Phukan, the former Home Minister and an expelled member of the AGP, has hinted at Prafulla Mohanta's connections with the ULFA More important, the Army has lodged an FIR against

Jainath Sharma, the Revenue Minister in Mohanta's Cabinet and a close confidant of the Assam Chief Minister, charging him with maintaining contacts with the ULFA Similar allegations against quite a few other Ministers are doing rounds in Guwahati The situation was no doubt very difficult for the industrial groups

This is, however, open to question whether the Tata Tea at all tried to seek justice from the law and order machinery of the State As per available indications, its attitude was, from the very beginning that of compromise and adjustments with the ULFA Or the company top-brass was immature enough to be misguided by the Intelligence Bureau In either case the Tata Tea's culpability is established One just cannot contravene the law and then say that he had been advised by the government to do so

People like Ram Jethmalani and C R Irani, editor-in-chief of *The Statesman,* who advanced several arguments in favour of the Tata house, should have kept this in mind They would have done better by a frank admission first that the Tatas had subverted the system of rule of law by their actions, whatever the circumstances At many levels the Tatas and their friends tried to obfuscate the issue In the beginning it was even denied that the industrial house had paid money to the ULFA But when the situation became hot and telephonic conversations between the Tatas and their friends like Nusli Wadia, Keshub Mahindra, Jayant Malhotra, Sam Maneckshaw got reported in *The Indian Express* the response from the Tatas' end took a different turn

Ratan Tata considers himself too clever and this has landed him in a mess On September 16 *The Statesman,* a newspaper known to be quite friendly with the Tata house, reported that Ratan Tata had a meeting with Prafulla Mohanta and there the big captains of the industry had told that some executives (of the Tata Tea) might have been involved but not the company itself and action would be taken against them if any of them was involved in anti-national activities Now even a child will not buy this argument Is it possible for any executive to meet top secessionist leaders in different countries abroad without the company's knowledge? Then, take the case of Pranati Deka, the ULFA member whose treatment in Bombay was allegedly financed by the Tata Tea The company's initial reaction, after the cat came out of the bag, was of ignorance Later it was admitted that the treatment cost of a "lady patient" was borne under the company's specialised medical treatment scheme But not a single press release from the Tata house has named Pranati Deka Again, the company leaves many loose ends Doesn't the Tata Tea really know the actual name of the patient? No satisfactory answer is forthcoming from the company's end

C R Irani has been tireless in writing his famous 'Caveats' on the Tata Tea controversy The initial reaction of the newspaper which he happens to edit was that of poohpoohing the Assam Government allegation that the Tata Tea had supported and financed the ULFA But when the heat became unbearable Irani wrote another Caveat in which he stated

> The document purporting to be minutes of a meeting between officials of the Tata Tea and ULFA in Bangkok, published by *The Indian Express,* which earlier published transcripts of illegally taped conversations, in fact confirms that they have not paid money which directly fuels militancy

For a leading newspaper the country it is now a question of direct or indirect abetment of militancy Surely not many sensible people will agree with such an attempt to draw the line

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THE Tata Tea controversy is a classic example of how the big corporate houses in India, in collusion with the political executive, have held the country to ransom Even a thousand letters from Ram Jethmalani, who has interests in the well-being of the Tatas, admitting indirectly that the corporate giant has committed a crime will not exonerate the Tatas His letter is a pointer to the amoral partnership that big business and the State machinery have hatched in this country—the chilling revelation in his open letter to Prafulla Mohanta being the fact that the medical facility (floated by the Tatas) was itself established with the knowledge and consent of the Intelligence Bureau and all contacts with the ULFA in and outside the country were reported to them

Ram Jethmalani tried to leave no stone unturned to save the Tatas on a very sticky wicket—whether the corporate house was in the know of the whereabouts of one of their topmost executives, Dr Brojen Gogoi On September 15, Ratan Tata and Krishnakumar, the Managing Director of the Tata Tea, did give this impression to Prafulla Mohanta that Gogoi, a key accused in the controversy, was in the USA although the man was staying in a Tata guest house in Calcutta at that time Jethmalani contends that Gogoi was on leave till the day of the meeting and had not reported for duty So the Tatas did not know that he was in Calcutta actually It is no one's business here to doubt the Tatas' honesty But from the end of Brojen Gogoi it is certainly too risky to hide in a company guest house without informing his bosses when there was an arrest warrant against him

The Tatas' actions in Assam and their subsequent attempts to tide over the crisis by dint of money and influence as brought out by *The Indian Express* has again pointed to the danger of assigning the private sector a prominent place in our national life—desperately attempted by Narasimha Rao, Manmohan Singh and Chidambaram—which it does not deserve It is now high time to also put the political executive in its proper place for the Tatas' actions could not have been possible without active collaborations from another set of politicians in Delhi Now the AGP too is getting exposed Sometimes back Prafulla Mohanta had boasted that his party had no links with the ULFA He could not foresee that in a few days time the Army would file an FIR against his Revenue Minister holding the latter guilty of maintaining connections with the ULFA and also arrest a district level General Secretary of the AGP on the same charge One thing now stands clear in the North-East the nation has a very tough time ahead Secessionism and militancy have thrived on the shoulders of not the militants alone but also on the backs of those who shamelessly engage in double-faced trade-offs ■

Need for a Set of Healthy Conventions

PK CHATTERJEE

The affairs of the State of Bihar will convince the public that a governmnet under the Indian Constitution can legally be termed a constitutional, representative, democratic government, without it being either representative or democratic It seems quite possible and permissible for the leader of a political party, to put it very mildly, not only to circumvent but to positively defile our Constitution without violating its letter But the point is that Laloo Yadav is not the first to indulge in this kind of manoeuvre Such exercises have taken place both at the Centre and in some States in the past So Laloo Yadav alone should not be blamed

In the past fifty years our politicians have deliberately failed to establish a single healthy convention There is an unwritten moral code of every Constitution which is carried forward by conventions A healthy growth of conventions and practices is essential to lead the people towards a principled constitutional order This commonplace has to be stated to understand that its opposite leads to the deconstruction of the entire spirit of the Constitution and leaves it bereft of the moral values underlying its provisions Ultimately it leads a whole generation to an unprincipled, corrupt political system which is worse than anarchy

The author is a Senior Advocate of the Supreme Court.

Conventionally, when Laloo Yadav resigned as the Chief Minister of Bihar his party having become a minority in the Legislature, the Governor should have ordered fresh elections as no other party or combination of parties in the Bihar Legislature was in a majority But that did not happen With the support of some independent MLAs and the members of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, Laloo Yadav was allowed to form the government headed by his wife, Mrs Rabri Debi The Governor appointed her the Chief Minister although she was not a member of the Legislature nor a leader of any party The Governor perpetrated a fraud on the Constitution Perhaps this unfortunate episode would not have taken place if the convention—that the Prime Minister of the country and the Chief Minister of a State must be the leader of the majority in the Lower House and must resign the moment he loses that majority—was firmly established in the past fifty years Several occasions arose in the past when such a convention could be established But unfortunately our political leaders from the very early days did not avail of these opportunities On the contrary, they perpetuated the colonial legacies of the British and also continued with the feudal administrative system keeping it wide open to the corruption left behind by them Constitutional provisions were used for wrong purposes, wrong precedents were set by justifying the actions on literal legalistic interpretations of the

Constitution instead of setting up healthy conventions

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THE first such instance was in 1952 and the venue was Tamil Nadu In March 1952 the Governor of Madras exercising his powers under Article 171 clause (3) (e) and (5) nominated, amongst others, Chakravarty Rajagopalachari as a Member of the Legislative Council An active politician belonging to a political party could not be given nomination by the Governor under Article 171 (3) (e) and (5) of the Constitution This was done at a time when the general elections had already taken place but no Ministry had yet been formed in Tamil Nadu After nominating him to the Legislative Council the Governor appointed him as the Chief Minister and called upon Rajagopalachari, who belonged to the Congress party, to form the government of the State There could not be greater abuse of the power of nomination by the Governor This was challenged by a petition under Article 226 of the Constitution in the High Court at Madras by a legislator, P Ramamurthy, belonging to the Communist Party

His contention was (1) that the Governor had perpetrated a fraud on the Constitution by nominating Rajagopalachari with the object of helping the Congress party, and (2) that the power under Article 171 (3) (e) and (5) could be exercised only on the advice of the Council of Ministers, there being no Council of Ministers the Governor could not exercise the power *suo motu*

It is not clear but it seems that it was also argued that a nominated Member to the Legislative Council could not be appointed the Chief Minister, as this was opposed to the fundamental principles of representative democracy

The High Court refused to decide the petition on the technical ground that the petitioner Ramamurthy not having suffered any personal detriment had no *locus standi* to challenge It was also held that the High Court could not go into a political issue (AIR, 1953, Madras, page 94)

On October 18, 1970 T N Singh, who was not a Member of the UP Legislature, was appointed the Chief Minister of UP by the Governor This was challenged in the Allahabad High Court under Article 226 of the Constitution and ultimately this case came up to the Supreme Court The Supreme Court said that if such Ministers who are responsible to the Assembly are accepted by it, there is nothing in the Constitution which makes it illegal so that the Courts could interfere (AIR, 1971, Supreme Court, page 131) Legally, the Supreme Court was absolutely correct Laloo Yadav's manoeuvre, however sordid it may look to the self-respecting patriotic Biharee, has been accepted and endorsed by the Bihar Assembly So what could be done?

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THE latest happenings in UP again repeat the same situation as in Bihar, and are accompanied by the same kind of unprincipled self-centred power-capturing game This time it is the BJP which is the main player The game-plan is similar to that evolved by Laloo Yadav in Bihar

The episode has not covered the BJP with glory On the contrary, it has only proved that they can indulge in the same kind of dirty politics as others whom they criticise but that they are also as much scared to face the electorate as the Congress and the rest of the parties In the ultimate analysis this episode will to a great extent affect its prestige and image as a party aspiring to win at the Centre While morally the present government of UP cannot be said to be in accordance with the Constitution, even its legal justification appears to be doubtful

A similar situation is in the offing in Gujarat and may surface any day And if that happens we shall perhaps again see the moral underpinnings of the Constitution being slaughtered at the altar of narrow self-centred power politics

The people can well understand the fear of the Congress, Janata Dal and all the other small parties to face the electorate. Their distance from the public has increased, their credibility has dwindled, their prestige is at a very low ebb thanks to the scam and corruption cases, their reliance on criminals and bad characters for procurement of votes has been exposed

Public opinion is no longer so weak People are very much alert of their rights today Hence the loss of public image is very much more costly to a political party these days

Of course, the country cannot overlook the happenings in Bihar or UP To the extent Bihar or UP are parts of India, weakening of democratic values there weakens the country to that extent But the process of degeneration did not start in Bihar nor can Laloo Yadav alone be held guilty

It is high time right-minded patriotic politicians come to the forefront and irrespective of their party affiliations set their heads together to lay down and strictly adhere to some healthy conventions to be followed in practice openly by all political parties both at the Centre and in the States so that the moral code of the Constitution is held aloft We have remained in the Third World for the last fifty years, let us not spend the next fifty years living in a third class world ■

MUSINGS

Indians in Africa

KULDIP NAYAR

Indians are spread all over Africa I recently met them in Uganda and South Africa and found them generally rich and prosperous But they are an exploiting class Their margin of profit in business—they are mostly traders—is 200 to 300 per cent The Whites are known to have sucked the Blacks dry Most Indians abroad, although comparatively low in profile, are no better Indeed, they are ugly Indians

"We try to recover our capital in two, three years' time," said one top Indian businessman I believe that some multinationals in India also talk in the same vein We may not have colonised people But Indians doing business in foreign countries are in the same class when it comes to earning profit

Regarding their own country, they make no pretence of investing in India or even wanting to do so But they have a delectable way of saying 'no' when you ask them about starting a business or an industry in India How could they do so when they were too far to have an effective control on what they operated They say they have *tan, man* and *dhan* at different places *Tan* (body) is where they live, the particular country *Dhan* (money), they say openly, is in London, where they also have a flat or two to make short sojourns Of course, their *man* (heart) is in India And when they say so they have no tug of conscience The ladies make such remarks with a straight face, more transparently than the men do Still, there is no talk of investment

I found the Gujaratis in the UK no different However, they have *tan* and *dhan* at the same place They live and bank in Great Britain Yet they continue to say that their *man* is in India They met me during my tenure as India's High Commissioner in London and would nostalgically recall their *Bharat Mata,* India, the country to which they belonged Older people told me that they would go back and die in their own land They too never talked about investing in India They do not even transact business with nationalised Indian banks which in 1990, when I was in London, had only one per cent of their accounts The other 99 per cent was with foreign banks

I often said at meetings that Indians abroad were more patriotic than the ones at home This is true, their concern over small happenings in the country showed that But their patriotism would dry up whenever I appealed to them to invest in India, to give at least 10 per cent of their assets The non-resident Indians (NRIs) have among them nine to 10 billion pounds (Rs 45 to 50 thousand crores) They are unnecessarily worried over the security of their capital, so much so that the Indian banks operating in the UK have practically no business from Indians living there

Exhortation during a crisis does not evoke much response either I discovered this when I presided over a State Bank of India meeting with the NRIs They claimed they could get higher interest if they invested outside India This is not true, they get 13 per cent on their deposits from Indian banks Many NRIs have borrowed money from British banks at the rate of six to seven per cent interest to get twice as much from India

The NRIs are prepared to buy property in India But the government has fixed the limit to one house And that too, after the rigmarole of acquiring permissions through the Reserve Bank It was an open secret that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was twisting our arm before considering a loan The then Finance Minister, Madhu Dandavate, found them cold during his visit to the US The then Railway Minister, George Fernades, told me on his way back to India, after meeting the World Bank officials, that they were not ready to bale out India "Why do you need others to help you?"—one Swiss banker asked me at a party in London "Your nationals have so much money in Swiss banks that they can finance six of your Five Year Plans!"

◆

TAKE Uganda It has two Gujarati billionaire families, which refuse to invest in India (one family has the famous actress Mumtaz as its daughter-in-law and the other is expecting relationship with another leading film star, Juhi Chawla) The country had nearly 90,000 odd people of Indian origin Then came Idi Amin who drove them out and confiscated their property

The present President Musaveni has already brought 10,000 of them back and restored them their property He has appealed to others to come back Uganda was in a mess in their absence It is limping back to normalcy Musaveni told an Indian gathering in the presence of Prime Minister Inder Gujral, when he visited Kampala, that the phosphate which India needed was in abundance under the Ugandan soil and that Indians should extract them and send to their homeland (The two countries have also signed a mining agreement)

South Africa has some Gujaratis, 75 per cent of the one million people of Indian origin the country has The affluence is spread out and concentrated to the two families as in the case of Uganda Most of these initial migrants were drawn from the Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh areas with some from eastern UP and Bihar A second wave of Indians came to this country after 1880 These were the "passenger Indians"—so-called because they paid their fares as passengers on board a steamship bound for South Africa This was the community of traders who mainly hailed from Gujarat

Although the Indians came to this country in 1860, it was not until over a century later in 1961 that they were granted the status of full citizens While their status changed, they were subjected to the same discrimination as the rest of the non-Whites in South Africa It is a tribute to their strong feeling of community and their self-help policies that giant strides were made in education and employment which has created a relatively affluent population group

The Indian community earns a per capita income of at least 40 per cent of the White per capita income as compared to the African community which earns only 18 per cent of the White per capita income While there are certainly a proportion of low-income earners and some unemployment in the Indian community, they are largely perceived as a successful community in the economic and social contexts ■

RESPONSE

Implications of D. Bandyopadhyay's Special Article

SHARAD PATIL

> *What is behind the year-old crisis in Parliament if not a clash of castes? The much drummed-up difference between "secular" and "communal" forces has proved to be without substance The Congress, reduced to a* savarna *base, supports the UF to keep the rival* savarna-*based BJP out of power and to entice back minorities, middle castes and ST-SCs*
>
> *—Bharat Gupta, ("The Entrenchment of Caste",* The Indian Express, *September 9, 1997)*

Both the Communist Parties (CPs)—CPI and CPI-M—are preparing for their respective party congresses The Left Front (LF), led by the two CPs, has allowed itself to be dragged by the bourgeois and casteist United Front (UF) and its Common Minimum Programme, which is supported both by the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) The entailing general crisis, external as well as internal, though hoodwinked by both the CPs, has plunged their distinguished sympathisers like Ashok Mitra (*Mainstream*, July 25, 1994) and now D Bandyopadhyay (*Mainstream*, September 6, 1997) in deep anxiety

I had commented on Mitra's article in *Mainstream* (August 13, 1994) Both were highly placed bureaucrats As for Bandyopadhyay, he was Land and Revenue Secretary to Benoy Chowdhury, who successfully implemented the great 'Operation Barga' ['*barga*' is derived from the Sanskrit '*varga*', meaning half, a cultivator who gave half of the farm produce (*batai*) to his landowner] Like Mitra, Bandyopadhyay adheres to the class methodology of Marxism, and this again in turn, in spite of his integrity and objectivity, makes a world of difference

From Struggle to Collaboration

Bandyopadhyay rightly defends and upholds the achievements of the Jyoti Basu Government, for example, Operation Barga (OB) He gives a very useful 'flash back' of the Barga, that is, the agrarian problem of West Bengal In my as yet unpublished paper "Greatest Riddle of the Indian Democratic Revolution" that is with *Mainstream*, I have referred to R P Dutt's *India Today* to show that the British Government had imposed the European feudal class relationship of lord and villain on the provinces of

Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and parts of North Madras by promulgating Cornwallis' Permanent Land Settlement in 1793, while the rest of India continued, to a greater or lesser extent, with the caste relationship of Mirasdar (dominant) and Upari peasant castes, service and boycotted castes, *which means that the so-called class semi-feudalism was limited to these (and other) zamindari areas, while the rest of the country continued under caste, semi-fedualism* Bandyopadhyay has failed to mention this basic fact as the starting point of his flash back, the reason being his adherence to the class methodology of Marxism

He explains that all tenants were not *bargadars*, which is crucial He goes on to say that the tenants, for whom the British Government had passed the Bengal Tenancy Act in 1884, became owners of their respective lands after the implementation of the West Bengal Estates Acquisition Act (WBEAA) in 1955 How many protected tenants were benefited by this? Though Bandyopadhyay does not give their number, he says that

> millions, constituting the majority of tenants under the BT Act, became owners of 'their own land' (Italics mine–SP)

It means, firstly, that these 'legal tenants' were the ones of Mirasdar and Upari castes who were forcibly transformed into tenants by the PSA of 1793, secondly, as the *bargadars* have been calculated to be 20 lakhs in number, these legal tenants must have been between 25 to 30 lakhs Bandyopadhyay attributes the increase in agricultural production of five to six per cent per year to the OB but not to the WBEAA

It is these peasant castes-cum-protected tenants who led the great Tebhaga struggle of pre-partition Bengal A participant in that struggle wrote in his article in *Social Scientist* that tenants belonging to the SC and ST castes, especially their womenfolk, were most self-sacrificing in the struggle It can be inferred that they were *bargadars* Whose lands they worked in? From what Bandyopadhyay says it appears that they cultivated the private lands of the zamindars

> Their (zamindars') argument was that the BT Act did not clearly include "sharecroppers" as tenant when it did so for so many other categories Secondly, the "little" land that they kept for "personal cultivation" were being encumbered by declaring sharecroppers and tenants

It was for these unprotected sharecroppers that the OB was launched between 1978 and 1982 But, the OB stopped at recording them as tenants, and Bandyopadhyay goes on to say that ownership has still not been conferred on them in the interests of 'conciliatory' politics

> That on the grounds of consensual and conciliatory politics, the LFG has decided as a matter of policy not to rock the boat violently is apparent in its actions and inactions The West Bengal Land Reform Act was amended radically after the LFG came to power with the objective of getting an additional half a million to three quarters of a million acres of land Nothing much has happened there In fact amendments have been made for dilution of some of the rigorous provisions To some in the LFG the now amended Land Reform Act is an embarrassment and to some others it is an impediment to "further progress" About 1 5 million sharecroppers have been registered There is no thinking about conferment of ownership right on them, though it was recommended by the Floyd Commission, more than half a century ago in 1940

On the contrary, eviction of many of them is taking place for the expansion of tea plantations, while half of them are still paying half of their crops instead of a quarter as per law to their respective landowners with the consent of the CPs

> Large-scale alienation of *barga* and patta lands has taken place in North Bengal for expansion of tea plantations No measure seems to have been taken either to restore the illegally alienated lands to their rightful owners or to regularise the tea-plantations The countryside is dominated by a new phenomenon called "mutuals" It is through such "mutuals" (local lingo) that about 40 to 50 per cent of registered sharecroppers still receive 50 per cent of crop as against 75 per cent under the law It is through these "mutuals" that reverse tenancy is taking place on a fairly large scale during the *rabi* and *boro* seasons And all such mutuals have the sanction of the panchayats and the Party apart from the contracting entities There is a serious regression taking place in the land reform front which seems no longer a matter of concern of the LFG

It appears from this that the LFG had inaugurated its reign with class collaboration!

Re-emergence of Dominant Peasant Castes

WHO control these much-publicised panchayats? Bandyopadhyay says that

> an analysis of the class character of the 1978 panchayat members showed that agricultural labourers and sharecroppers constituted less than five per cent of the total members

He goes on to note that

> because of the first phase of land reform, panchayats have been under the control of the middle peasantry

In reality the first phase should have been attributed to the implementation of the WBEA Act in 1955 with which the peasant castes came into their own Though the recorded *bargadars* could have developed their middle strata, it should not be forgotten that they belonged mostly to the SC and ST and the policy of collaboration adopted by the LFG hardly left any scope for their developing a middle strata

> Perhaps because of the unhappy experience of gheraos' in the labour front and some degree of militant mobilisational role of the peasant organisations which led to serious inter-party clashes for occupation of vested land ultimately resulting in the collapse of the second United Front Government, the LFG consciously eschewed

> the mobilisational line and deliberately adopted the policy of consensus and conciliation The compulsion of parliamentary politics, intense desire to stay in power by not confronting a not-so-friendly Central Government under Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi (1980-89), deliberate abandonment of the "class struggle" line of the earlier UF led to a dilution of revolutionary ardour and zeal

Neil Webster noticed it as early as the late eighties and remarked in 1990

> Further consolidation of political power has necessitated a toning down of the revolutionary politics There has been a shift away from "Class Struggle" to institutional management This has avoided the danger of alienating a section of rich peasants

Bandyopadhyay has been discerning enough to point out that this 'institutional management' did not include the recorded *bargadars*

> The Land Reform Act made enabling provisions for consolidation of poor men's holdings up to one hectare This would have enabled them to get optional benefit from new technology Nothing has happened The same law provided for formation of cooperative service societies for the beneficiaries of land reforms and other poor peasants to have an institutional format for better extension service, support of inputs and credit, better marketing facilities and overall higher bargaining power as a group both in the social and economic arena The achievements here seem to be nil

Hence, it will be safe to conclude that the increase in agricultural production has not come from the low caste bargadars and that the elite of the dominating peasant castes, as we shall see, is firmly in the saddle

Resurgence of Moribund Caste

THE present literacy rate of 58 5 per cent, given by Bandyoapadhyay, does not reveal the reality Ashok Mitra had pointed out that there is a disastrous fall in literacy

> The neglect of literacy and primary education which has pushed down West Bengal's rank from the second place in all India in 1951 to the 19th in 1991, a level of literacy as low as two or three or even less per 100 females in the Scheduled Castes, Tribes and Other Backward Classes of the State

Being a class Marxist, Mitra equates the literacy rates of SCs, STs and OBCs When literacy was 40 per cent for whole India, it was 24 per cent for the SCs and 16 per cent for the STs The figure for the OBCs was not given But it could not have been much above that of the SCs The allocation for primary education has been slashed down even from three per cent I know from my own experience that primary teachers in Adivasi areas prepare false musters and the Extension Officers inspect all the schools of the taluka at the taluka place itself! Missionary schools and dispensaries in mountain fastnesses have become a dream for the Adivasis The literacy rates for the agricultural labourers, given by Bandyopadhyay, are no better

> The same (NCAER) survey shows that among the landless wage earners only 43 6 per cent of male and 27 5 per cent of female are literate as against 93 4 per cent of male and 84 3 per cent of female among the large farmer group

When the literacy rate for the whole country is 45 per cent (550 million illiterates, according to Neerja Chowdhury, *The Indian Express*, September 9, 1997) how can 43 6 per cent male agricultural labourers be literates? As for 'the large farmer group', to which peasant caste in West Bengal this transcendent entity belongs? Bandyopadhyay is outspoken enough to say that this 'class' is the only beneficiary in all respects

> The bad effect is that a few are cornering the benefits and enclassing themselves from the "middle" to the "upper" throwing further land reform out of the political agenda

These 'large farmers' are not a homogeneous class in India They form elites of the dominant peasant castes In present-day India they are the main exploiters of the SCs and STs in class terms and oppressors in caste terms This caste reality has emerged after the abolition of statutory zamindari in zamindari areas, but it had emerged in non-zamindari areas much earlier Young Marxist scholars like Sekhar Bandyopadhyay, in spite of their stress on caste, think that the caste system was milder in Bengal than in other States The Marathi daily *Lokmat* reports in its issue of October 6, 1997 that the Dalits of Gopinathpur in Midnapur district of West Bengal were not allowed to enter into a Hindu temple and that the local parties advised them to desist from worship Thus, class collaboration turns into caste collaboration

Inhuman Economism

BANDYOPADHYAY has drawn attention to the serious problem of economism of the Left trade union movement of West Bengal The first example he gives is of doctors' association and employees' union of the Health Department

> *The Statesman* of July 18, 1997 carried a news item captioned "Pregnant Woman Forced Out of Free Health Centre" Paban Rajbanshi, an agricultural worker, took his wife Phulan who was in acute labour pain to Gokarna Block Primary Health Centre and paid Rs 10 as "preliminary charges" for admission But the medical officer and the attendant refused to treat Phulan unless "fees" were paid Paban did not have money but promised to pay the fee after the doctor attended to his wife the doctor "literally dragged Phulan out of the labour room" and Phulan delivered a baby at the bus-stand
>
> Yet panchayats would not be allowed any control or supervision over such medical centres as the doctors'

Years in pursuit of a vision

It was vision that made our freedom possible Then began a journey to fulfill that vision It's been uphill, all the way But we carried on And progressed Today, we can look back at the journey we've completed with pride And at the one ahead with hope

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> association and employees' union oppose this move The public sector health facilities are in shambles

Paban seems to be an Adivasi from his surname, and the Adivasis are considered to be subhuman in the caste system Phulan's case was not taken up by any Left *stri-mukti* organisation of West Bengal The total passivity of the women's movement in West Bengal is put in a question-mark by Bandyopadhyay

> One wonders what the Left-wing women's organisations which started in the mid-forties after the Great Bengal Famine have been doing all these days

This passivity is brahminical as evidenced by Kanak Mukherjee's booklet *Women's Emancipation Movement in India* (1989) in which she is careful to omit the names of Savitri and Jotiba Phuley from her list of women's emancipators (pp 50-51)

Education is in the same sorry state due to the total control over it of the teachers' union

> The All Bengal Teachers' Association (whatever might be its present name), a front organisation of teachers of a Left party, totally controls the school education system and as a trade union wedded to the base principles of economism is busy garnering benefits for its members ignoring the interests of students Teachers are busy doing private practice and running costly "coaching shops" where attendance is enforced by manipulating class examination results

As a result, bribes offered to get the jobs of primary teachers, high school teachers and college teachers must be finding their way into the pockets of trade union leaders They who pay bribes, do not work or teach The worst victim is primary education, only available to the OBCs, SCs and STs, the allocation for which has been further cut down from three per cent

POWERS AND PROSPECTS

Reflections on Human Nature and the Social Order

by

NOAM CHOMSKY

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Bandyopadhyay seems to compensate his disenchantment from the LFG by substituting it with his enchantment for the Left and Democratic Front Government of Kerala as appears from his paper 'People's Participation in Planning, Kerala Experiment' in *Economic and Political Weekly* (September 27, 1997) An Ashok Mitra or a D Bandyopadhyay from Kerala is needed to give a similar objective picture of Kerala For the present I refer only to M K Sukumaran Nair's paper "Rural Labour Market in Kerala", *Economic and Political Weekly* (August 30, 1997), who observes that due to the iron frame of agricultural labourers' union

> nearly 19 per cent of the paddy land is kept fallow in the sample villages

Though the wages of agricultural workers of Kerala are the highest in the country, the screwpine mat weaver womenfolk of the Kerala fishermen, who number two lakhs, earn Rs 2 per day by selling their wares and no institutional help to them is forthcoming from the State In comparing West Bengal and Kerala, the historical background of the two States and the present organisational preparedness of their toiler caste-classes should not be lost sight of Nayanar could prevent Ezhava Gauri from becoming the Chief Minister in spite of the electoral promise, because of his trade union clout, his belonging to the dominating Nayar caste and the support of E M S Namboodiripad

It is this inhuman and power-centred economism of the working class that must have been one of the main factors that led to the fall of socialism in Europe The Indian CPs lead only the economic or *savarna* section of the Indian working class in which they face stiff competition from the BJP Though Kerala has the mightiest agricultural labourers' union in the country, the biggest ex-untouchable caste of Pulayas have their independent formidable organisation The Kisan Sabhas of the CPs have remained totally inactive when independent peasant organisations have been conducting big mass struggles of the peasants

If the CPs want to accomplish their respective brands of democratic revolution, they will first have to unite the economic and social sections of the Indian proletariat For bringing about this unity, the CPs will have to synthesise their class-annihilating philosophy of Marxism with Ambedkar's caste-annihalting philosophy of Neo-Buddhism The ensuring party Congress of the CPs can initiate this historic process by hammering out the programme of the caste-annihilating democratic revolution ■

BOOK REVIEW

A Tragedy of Errors

M R NARAYAN SWAMY

Assignment Colombo by J N Dixit, Konark Publishers, New Delhi, 1997, Rs 400

Three points stand out in J N Dixit's eminently readable and highly-informative and incisive *Assignment Colombo*—an account mainly of the critical years the former High Commissioner of India spent in Sri Lanka (1985-89) It was the period when New Delhi, after arming and training the Sri Lankan Tamils in the art of guerrilla warfare, went on to sign an accord with Colombo in an attempt to end the very campaign for Eelam it had earlier backed In the process, India militarily took on the LTTE, burnt its fingers, and eventually withdrew from the battlefields bruised and after losing the friendship of both the Tamils and Sinhalese at large Dixit was India's eyes and ears in Sri Lanka and played a key role in the diplomatic drama which preceded and followed the July 1987 India-Sri Lanka Agreement

Dixit makes a rare but honest admission of where he himself went wrong—this, in my opinion, is the most significant aspect of the book Two, the colossal lack of clarity of the Indian establishment emerges most clearly as Dixit documents the confusion which marked the official thinking on Sri Lanka Although Dixit may not want to and does not say it, Rajiv Gandhi comes out as a poor leader and decision-maker (The book is dedicated both to Rajiv Gandhi and members of the IPKF) The third highlight of the book is that it reinforces the widely-held belief (it is more than a belief though) that Sri Lankan politicians are to a large extent responsible for the mess that Sri Lanka is in today And if a pick can be made, undoubtedly slain former President Ranasinghe Premadasa would head the list—an ambitious man who wanted to use the LTTE to boost his own political career and humiliate Rajiv Gandhi and India but ended up, like Rajiv Gandhi, getting blown to bits by the never-say-die Tigers *Assignment Colombo* is an invaluable addition to contemporary Sri Lankan history

Dixit informs us—and it is the first time anyone from within the select Indian circle which decided the Accord is speaking on the subject—that the then Indian Army chief, Krishnaswamy Sundarji, had indeed boasted to Rajiv Gandhi that he would be able to militarily neturalise the LTTE within two-to-four weeks if the latter were not to toe the Indian line RAW chief Anand Verma went a step further and claimed that the Tigers "will listen to us" and so Gandhi could go ahead with the Agreement despite widespread uncertainty in Colombo and the LTTE's refusal to wholeheartedly accept it

> One over-arching miscalculation of India was our under-estimating Prabhakaran's passionate, even obsessive, commitment to the cause of Tamil Eelam, his authoritarianism and single-minded nature, his tactical cleverness and his resilience in adversity (p 343)

Dixit goes on to say that he, on the other hand, over-estimated (now dead) Sri Lankan President Junius Jayewardene's sincerity and political will to come to a genuine compromise with the Tamils with the help of the Indian Government He also admits that he (Dixit) faulted in assuming that the LTTE could be isolated with the help of the other Tamil groups and that Jayewardene may be able to overcome opposition from within his government to the Accord

Now this was indeed Dixit's—and the Indian Government's—greatest blunder in that era Dixit says the Indian media's adverse reaction to the Accord in the aftermath of the IPKF-LTTE showed

> even in retrospect (it) had no detailed comprehension of the rationale of India's involvement in the Sri Lankan crisis in the first instance (p 237)

He is wrong Much of the media criticism then revolved around precisely the mistakes which Dixit now admits—and very honestly—the Indian establishment committed One related to the lack of sincerity of the Sinhalese leadership to come to terms with the Tamils, particularly the LTTE And secondly, in my opinion more important, who is/was India to make Colombo and LTTE come to an agreement and make them live in peace if they (for whatever reason) do/did not want to do so? Besides the Sri Lankan Government's visible lack of sincerity in being friends with the LTTE, the latter was equally adamant against giving up the struggle for Eelam Rajiv Gandhi and his advisers failed to read this, to add to the Indian woes, its military and intelligence brass lived in a fool's paradise Rajiv Gandhi, Dixit admits, had also come to this belated conclusion by the time the general elections were called in 1989 (which he lost) But it was too late

It is surprising that even after (finally) coming to understand the LTTE and Prabhakaram so well, Dixit still believes that it could have been militarily defeated by the Sri Lankan Army in 1987 if only India had not intervened and that the Tigers could have been wiped out by the IPKF if it had been allowed to remain in Sri Lanka for six more months (Many in Sri Lanka hold this view too) Both conclusions are fallacies—the outcome of a mindset which led to the unfortunate death of nearly 1200 Indian soldiers and which is still bleeding Sri Lanka

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It is time Indians understand—and gracefully admit—that the 1987 Accord was not sabotaged by Sri Lankans alone The Indian establishment played an equally, if not greater, damaging role—probably without realising it The Indian tragedy in Sri Lanka began with Indira Gandhi deciding to arm and train the Tamils from 1983 without even being clear to what purpose did she want to split the island-nation or just put pressure on Colombo for its Western tilt? If the former is true, India failed miserably, if the latter is true, it is a monumental crime that Indira Gandhi committed

The Accord failed (apart from Colombo's skulduggery as well as the LTTE's refusal to compromise) due to the arrogance of the Indian military leadership, the pretensions of the Indian intelligence (which thought it could control the LTTE when it had absolutely no leverage on the group) and blundering Indian diplomats like Romesh Bhandari, who Dixit tells us, could not even distinguish a Sri Lankan Tamil leader who was long dead from another was who was alive and kicking! And, of course, the unbelievable scenario of the IPKF fighting the LTTE when the Tigers were nicely holed up in Tamil Nadu, and Dixit warning Colombo not to have secret parleyss with the LTTE while the RAW was doing precisely that (with Rajiv Gandhi's blessings and without keeping Our Man in Colombo informed!) Dixit says RAW chief Anand Verma made trips to Colombo and met Jayewardene, he doesn't mention that Verma would every time request the Sri Lankan President not to pass on the details of the discussions to Dixit! The height of internecine war within the Indian Government which cost the country dearly

The Indian diplomacy's flip-flop can be understood if one just looks at New Delhi's attitude towards the LTTE those years India trained five Tamil groups, obviously to maintain an equilibrium, but when the LTTE destroyed the others, India kept mum India propped up the moderate TULF, but kept quiet when the latter came under attack from the LTTE (which was armed, among others, by New Delhi) When the Accord was signed, we gave pre-eminent status to the LTTE in a still-born administration for Sri Lanka's North-East When groups like the EPRLF protested, the External Affairs Ministry ignored them with contempt When the LTTE dumped us, we went back to the EPRLF—only to dump them again Prabhakaran was one day considered the most vital factor for peace, another day Rajiv Gandhi thundered publicly in Tamil Nadu that Prabhakaran represented no one but himself One day New Delhi thought it fit to brazenly violate Sri Lankan airspace to "feed" the allegedly starving Tamils in Jaffna, weeks later we forced an Accord down Jayewardene's throat and expected the Sri Lankans to be grateful to us that we did not break up their country

Unfortunately, the otherwise well brought-out book contains several errors, related mostly to Sri Lankan names There are others as well Sri Lanka got independence in 1948, not 1949 (p x), Prabhakaran shot dead Jaffna Mayor Alfred Duriappah in 1975, not 1978 (p 12), Sinhalese Buddhists do not constitute 85 per cent of the Sri Lankan population (p 13), the EPRLF is not "Eelam People's Revolutionary Forum" (p 27), the LTTE leader who was shot dead along with a RAW operative mistakenly by the IPKF while returning from a meeting with Prabhakaran was Johny, not Raheem (p 223-4)

I shall make three final observations Indira Gandhi, Dixit says, began supporting the Tamil groups from 1980 No, the support started only after the bloody anti-Tamil riots of Colombo in July 1983 The first time the RAW came face to face with Prabhakaran (although he himself did not realise this then) was when he was jailed in Tamil Nadu after a shootout in Madras in 1982

Second Dixit, while denying Prabhakaran's allegation that he was keep a virtual prisoner in Delhi's Hotel Ashok in July 1987, claims journalists were

> not allowed to be in touch with *any party* negotiating the agreement for legitimate and obvious reasons (emphasis added)

This is not the truth All the Tamil groups (who were incidentally put up in the adjoining Hotel Samrat) were allowed to freely interact with the media Only the LTTE was prevented from doing so True, some of us managed to speak of Yogi and Balasingham on telephone Later even the calls were not transferred to Prabhakaran's suite 518

Finally, Dixit says Rajiv Gandhi

> pulled back from giving material support to Tamil militants (p 249-50)

The on-off Indian military training of Tamil militants, including the LTTE, went on right until the July 1987 Accord In fact weapons were handed over as late as mid-July, and some of them were hurriedly taken back when the RAW realised Rajiv Gandhi was seeking to end Tamil separatism! (Did Dixit really not know this?) ■

Historicity of π, and Reality of Rocks

I: AN INVITATION TO IDEOLOGICAL RECONSTRUCTION

C K RAJU

Tradition requires a fallen warrior to be honoured on the battlefield, like Bhishma Paulos Mar Gregorios fought an ideological war which is still on His last article in *Mainstream* "Sokal's Hoax and Weinberg's Vanity" (Annual Number, 1996, p 101), was an invitation for a debate Why did Gregorios want to initiate a serious debate on the metaphysical implications of scientific theories, starting from Sokal's hoax on post-modernism? I feel obliged to clarify this, since this was his last paper, and we happened to talk about it at our last meeting, a fortnight before his death

Post-modernism

POST-MODERNISTS have good reasons to reject the dichotomy of form and content, for the uninitiated find its intrinsic (contentual?) triviality often in stark contrast with the complexity of its presentation (Gregorios was evidently not a post-modernist, in this sense at least—he always spoke clearly!) The standing joke at IIAS, Simla, was that a typical lecture involved a permutation and combination of "discourse, Derrida, deconstruction, Diaspora, " used in a syntactically correct way Sokal has forcefully established the element of truth in this joke that, in the post-modern world, obscurity of presentation may adequately substitute for the absence of substance Sokal's paper[1] incorporated various obscure statements which had no meaning,[2] yet it was published by the reputed journal *Social Text*

Some aspects of post-modernism, like pluralism, may be meaningful, but may mean something other than what many people imagine Extreme pluralism is destructive of collective action hence reinforces *status quo* There are no facts, no objects, hence no name-object theory of meaning The word "chair" has five billion different meanings, which we must first sort out before we engage in action In fact, we cannot ever hope to sort out the meaning, because my reading ("no chair") is as good as your intended sense, and the pluralist does not accept the majority decision as legitimate Thus "pluralism" blocks even the communication needed for action

But one must not underestimate the seductiveness of pluralism It makes one feel important Middle-aged women lose self-esteem in conventional society, for they do not fit the conventional roles of either mother or wife with the children having grown up and the husband having grown old One academic, I know, used to keep his middle-aged women fans endlessly fascinated by constantly listing the variety of facets to their personality "Vidyut as a wife, Vidyut as a mother, Vidyut as an academician, Vidyut as an activist, " The same argument also justified his refusal to take the mildest political stand "I will not join your peace movement because I don't know which peace you are talking about Indian peace, Pakistani peace, Chinese peace, Soviet peace, American peace " Thus, in practice, pluralism may be indistinguishable from smug 'indifferentism'

Perhaps the fault lies in carrying pluralism to an extreme, and moderate pluralism is the way out But, if all traditions are *not* equally valid, one needs to sort out *which* traditions are sought to be strengthened When not professional theologians, enthusiastic post-modernists often have a background in English literature and narrative history, and are almost always from the "liberal arts" stream Usually, this means that they are equally uninformed about both local traditions and science, though they may dabble in fashionably local colour Hence, the tradition they implicitly reinforce is that of the Western state-church in its battle for the state with science one the one hand, and against other cultures on the other!

As an example consider the very important, though politically sensitive issue, of gender in Islam I have heard an undoubtedly courageous activist, admittedly brought up on Enid Blyton, speaking in all sincerity of "male rationality", while opposing Ghazali who was opposed to the Mu'tazilite philosophy of reason (*kalam*)[3] [It was in opposition to (a misunderstanding of) Ghazali that the Thomists stressed the role of reason above providence Thus, today, providence plays a dominant role in Islamic theology just as rationality does in Western Christian theology Hence, today, in the West it makes sense to juxtapose male with rationality—both of which are dominant—while in Islam it becomes an oxymoron] The problems with such a muddle ought to be evident to all for example, in Western propaganda today Islamic fundamentalism has displaced communism as the big threat to the West Thus, it is possible that even moderate pluralism, applied thoughtlessly, may only strengthen imperial centrism

Should one, then, avoid value-judgements about the condition of women in Islamic countries? Avoiding value-judgements *seems* fair, but it is actually a value-judgement which reinforces *status quo*, hence the deeper unfairness existing in society So, what one needs is not so much pluralism as an alternative basis for a universal value system Gregorios appealed to tradition for this basis Which tradition?—In a series of articles in *The Times of India*, about five years ago, in what was incidentally a grand secular gesture by a religious leader,[4] he explicitly identified that tradition with the Madhyamika Buddhism, represented by Nagarujuna In contrast, a scientific leader, E C G Sudarshan, who belonged to Gregorios' church, identifies with the opposing Advaita-Vedanta tradition of Sankara (which, he was recently[5] at pains to point out, doesn't necessarily have the casteist connotations it is believed to have, as is clear from, for example, Sri Narayana Guru of Kerala)

The Political Relevance of Tradition

CAN tradition be politically relevant except for revivalists? I give three examples to illustrate Gregorios' thinking

(i) In this fiftieth year of the Constituent Assembly it may be well to reflect on this example offered by Gregorios, the linguist The Constitution of India begins with five words 'sovereign,' 'socialist,' 'secular,' 'democratic,' 'republic,' none of which can be translated into any Indian language!

Behind each word there is a concept, behind the concept there is a philosophy, and behind the philosophy there is a tradition which provides a context and a meaning to utterances The tradition also informs us whose interests are being supported Consider, for instance, 'democracy' The Buddhist *samgha*-s were democratic When a new monk wanted admission to the *samgha*, everyone was asked thrice if he wished to speak against it The final decision was on the principle of voting In the Samanna Phala Sutta, the Buddha's second counter-question to Ajatasattu[6] shows that though there were 'slaves' the 'slaves' were free to leave the service of the king, and join the *samgha*, for instance In replying to this counter-question, the king agrees, he would greet the former slave with reverence Women were treated as equals a young woman left an old hunchbacked husband to join the *samgha* and sing, "free I am, thrice free" In contrast, in the Greek tradition of democracy there were five slaves for every free man Women went unrepresented Which concept democracy do we use? Which tradition of democracy does that refer to? Whose interests does that serve?

Divorcing the Constitution from local tradition has a definite political effect It favours the interests of an imperial centre by favouring people linked to it It 'legally' marginalises people, while declaring that they are all equal Would northerners accept a Constitution initially drafted in Malayalam? Are we to believe that the people of this country agreed to abide by a set of rules they did not understand? A set of rules that they could not hope to understand without becoming a part of the elite? Or, should we believe that our elite conned the people into believing that these rules were for their own good? Are we to believe that the government of these elite, premised on these rules, was unable to find resources to ensure literacy in half a century? Or, should we believe that keeping most people illiterate was the deliberate aim of the elite to protect their hereditary privileges?

(ii) The second example concerns an issue close to his heart His opinion was that the present historical moment offered a great opportunity for our own Marxists to provide the lead worldwide While he steadfastly maintained that Marxism was unquestionably preferable to market economics, he thought that Marxism was not beyond criticism and had to respond to new challenges But those capable of responding to these challenges had abandoned the *theoria* of ideological discussion as 'too dangerous', preferring the security of party discipline, they had also mostly abandoned *praxis* in favour of the realpolitick of strategy and personalities Hence there was no sign on the horizon of a revolution either ideological or political

In the absence of any indigenous ideological development, as in the Soviet Union and China, the ideology could not gain a sufficiently wide base To be absorbed, it needed a vehicle with simplicity and universal appeal, like Buddhism Barring a few honourable exceptions, like D D Kosambi, most Marxists here have held tradition in contempt, as superstition They thought, and still think and act on the belief that an educated person should know all about the great Soviet Industrialisation Debate in the 1920s, but need know nothing at all about local traditions This attitude is shared in practice by revivalists, and even revivalists ideologues, though they don't say so, offer plenty of examples of their unfeigned ignorance of tradition But unlike revivalists, Marxists maintain that they represent the poor and the downtrodden, who have no avenue of communication except tradition

Thus we have the myth that ideology cannot spread unless people are educated, that is, freed from the clutches of tradition This facilely overlooks the history of actually available education education was integrated to the needs of Western Christian theology ("breeding of clerics"[7]), colonialism (Macaulay "making brown Englishmen"), and lately industrial capitalism (technology innovation and commercialisation), in that chronological order So the idea of first educating people, and then making them politically aware is somewhat like our post-independence plan to make the country socialist by first making it capitalist!

To summarise, ideology, like the seed of an idea, cannot grow roots until it is planted in the domestic soil of tradition Given the universality of some Indian traditions, it is conceivable that the resulting ideology may have international significance

(iii) Gregorios thought that a fundamental re-examination of metaphysical categories (including space, time, and logic was a necessary and important prelude to any such idelogical reconstruction, which itself preceded a political transformation German philosophy and Indian tradition both provide many examples Consider the case of *Lokayata* metaphsics [8] *Lokayata* rejected caste Since caste was justified using the theory of causation (*karma/samkara*) Lokayata rejected both *karma* and *samskara* Contrary to the Western idea of causation,[9] this idea of causation was based on the (physical) belief in quasi-cyclic time, so *Lokayata* rejected quasi-cyclic time This was achieved by modifying logic. rejecting testimony and inference as valid *pramana,* permitting only the manifest (*pratyaksha)* The more subtle Buddhist rejection of caste also relates to a transformation of time and logic which, however, is not so easy to state

(To be continued)

REFERENCES

1 Alan D Sokal, "Transgressing the Boundaries—Towards a Transformative Hermeneutics of Quantum Gravity", *Social Text,* Spring/Summer 1996

2 Sokal himself later claimed that his earlier article was deliberately meaningless Alan D Sokal in "A Physicist Experiments with Cultural Studies", *Lingua Franca,* May/June 1996, 62-64

3 The tradition of rationality in Islam has been so thoroughly forgotten, that someone thought I was referring to *kalam* (pen)! See, R Sorabji, *Time Creation, and the Continuum,* London, Duckworth, 1983; Majid Fakhry, *Islamic Occasionalism,* London 1958, H A Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalam,* Cambridge, Mass, 1976 The debate over providence vs rationality, in the modified form of a debate over the reality of ontically broken time, is still continuing in physics in the context of Hawking-Panrose 'singularities' (in the theological context of creation) and in the context of the nature of reality after quantum mechanics, *a la* Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen and John Bell Gregorios used Bell's inequalities to argue against naive realism in his *A Light too Bright The Enlightenment Today,* State University of New York, Albany, 1992, p 168, 190 For background information, see C K Raju, "On Time 6a Bell and Non-Locality", "One Time 6b Quantum Mechanical Time", "On Time 7 Cosmological Time", *Physics Education,* 10 (1993) 55-73, 143-161, 11 91994) 49-65

4 It should be clarified, for those who are familiar with Christianity only in its *exclusive* post-Augustinian form prevalent in the West, that Gregorios explic tly rejected this form, he belonged to a tradition which reached India before Augustine, and at about the time of Nagarjuna

5 December 31, 1996 and January 1, 1997, personal communication

6 *Digha Nikaya,* (Tr) Maurice Walshe, Wisdom Publications, Boston, 1995, p 97-8

7 Isaac Barrow, Letter of December 3, 1674, as Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, opposing a plea for a royal dispensation against ordainment as a precondition for a Fellowship, said, "It would destroy successsion and subvert the *principal aim of the college which was the breeding of clerics,'* [Emphasis mine] But a little later Barrow is believed to have arranged such a dispensation for the Lucasian professorship which he had earlier vacated in favour of his student Isaac Newton who was preparing to resign, rather than be ordained, for he believed that the post-Nicene church had distorted the Bible to suit its political goals The letter is cited in Richard S Westfall, *Never at Rest, A Biography of Isaac Newton* Cambridge University Press, 1983, p 333, note 1

8 Debi Prasada Chattopadhyaya, *Lokayata, A Study in Ancient Indian Materialism,* People's Publishing House, 1978

9 That is, the notion of "cause" in Augustine's theology which also involved an explicit rejection of 'pagan' quasi-cyclicity by confusing it with Stoic 'eternal recurrence', and was absorbed into Newton's physics in a way too complicated to explain here

Abid Hussain Committee's Recommendations and the Small Scale Sector

RUDDAR DATT

The Abid Hussain Committee, which is referred to also as an expert group, did not have any representative belonging to the SSI sector or the KVIC who have been responsible for the vast expansion of the SSI sector in the post-independence period It would be, therefore, presumptuous to describe such a Committee as an expert group Moreover, the function of an expert is to present arguments eliminating biases of a personal nature, but a reading of the Abid Hussain Committee Report only confirms that the recommendations had been drafted earlier than the arguments to support these recommendations All kinds of arguments were built in to give the report the facade of recommendations from an expert group

Our reasons for making this scathing assessment of the Abid Hussain Committee Report are as follows

Firstly, the so-called expert group maintains Hitherto, the accent of small enterprise development was infant industry protection predicated on the assumption that new enterprises cannot withstand predatory competition from large companies This is a misreading of the intentions of the planners The Industrial Policy Resolution of 1956 while emphasising the role of cottage and small scale industries stated

> They provide immediate large-scale employment, they offer a method of ensuring a more equitable distribution of the national income and they facilitate an effective mobilisation of capital and skill which might otherwise remain unutilised

Essentially, the argument for small scale industries was that of generating employment and in this sense, small scale units accounted for an employment of 15 26 million in 1995-96 Whereas all the large and medium units hardly account for 5 45 million jobs If the policies of dereservation as recommended by the Committee are adopted, is there any guarantee that the large and medium units will be able to absorb the workers rendered surplus from the SSI units? Nowhere does the expert group touch the employment argument It is presumed that the safety net approach will provide some sops to these redundant workers or else they should fall back on agriculture to swell the ranks of landless labourers

So far as the infant industry argument is concerned, it is as much valid for the large sector as for the small sector The real issue is that of unequal competition and the preservation and development of this sector to foster employment, more especially self-employment, as also to ensure better distribution of national income

Secondly, the Committee argues that the policy of protection should be replaced by a policy of promotion as the cornerstone of future policy The basic reason for this as given by the Committee is the failure of the reservation policy to promote the growth of the small scale units Nothing can be farther from the truth than this assertion by the Committee Facts belie the findings of the Committee

1 Ever since the Second Plan enunciated its policy of promoting the SSI units, protection of these industries was always supported by promotion in the form of cheap supply of credit, marketing assistance by creating a marketing network of handloom and handicraft shops throughout the length and breadth of the the country, improvement in technology, design and packaging of the SSI products, training of artisans and the creation of industrial estates to help new entrepreneurship
2 As a result of the protection and promotion measures, there has been a vast expansion of the SSI sector in terms of production, employment and exports The average annual growth rate of employment in the SSI sector for the period 1980-81 to 1990-91 works out to be 5 8 per cent and in the subsequent period of economic reforms (1990-91 to 1995-96), works out to be 4 1 per cent This growth rate in employment is commendable and it strengthens the belief that the absorption of surplus labour can take place in the small scale sector The growth rate of employment in the medium and large sectors is negligible The data supplied by the *Annual Survey of Industries (1993-94)* reveals that all factories with capital investment of Rs 50 lakhs and above (a proxy for medium and large sector) account for a total employment of 5 45 million in 1993-94 as against an employment of 13 94 million in the SSI sector For the workers, it is not a choice between high wage employment and low wage employment, it is a choice between low wage employment and no employment The SSI sector promises the scope for more employment, whereas the employment prospects in the large and medium sectors to absorb the teeming growth of workers are very bleak The Committee is guilty that it just ignores the employment question which is central to better human development
3 On the export front, the small sector has shown a

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much higher growth rate than the medium and large sectors Exports from the small sector jumped from Rs 1643 crores in 1980-81 to Rs 9100 crores in 1990-91 and then skyrocketed to Rs 36,470 crores in 1995-96 The rate of growth of exports of the SSI sector was 20 9 per cent for the period 1980-81 to 1999-91 and 32 0 per cent for the period 1990-91 to 1995-96 As a proportion of total exports, the share of the SSI sector represents 34 per cent in 1995-96 as against 24 5 per cent in 1980-81 Obviously, the contribution of the small scale sector is much better than that of the large corporate sector on the export front

TABLE 1
Production of Small Scale Sector

Rs crores

Year	*Production at current prices*	*Price Index (1981-82 = 100)*	*Production at 1981-82 prices*
1973-74	7300	48 8	14,959
1977-78	14,300	64 9	22,034
1980-81	28,060	89 9	31,212
1985-86	61,228	125 4	48,826
1990-91	1,55,340	182 7	85,025
1991-92	1,78,700	207 8	85,996
1992-93	2,09,300	228 7	91,517
1993-94	2,41,648	247 8	97,517
1994-95	2,93,990	274 7	1,07,022
1995-96	3,56,213	295 8	1,20,424

TABLE 2
Employment Generation in SSI Sector

In lakhs persons

Year	*Employment*
1973-74	39 7
1980-81	71 0
1985-86	96 0
1990-91	125 3
1991-92	130 0
1992-93	134 0
1993-94	139 4
1994-95	146 6
1995-96	152 6

TABLE 3
Contribution of Small Industries to Exports

Rs crores

Year	*Export by SSIs (1)*	*Total Exports (2)*	*SSI Exports as % of Total Exports*
1973-74	393	2523	15 6
1977-78	845	5404	15 6
1980-81	1643	6711	24 5
1985-86	2769	11,578	23 9
1990-91	9100	32,558	27 9
1991-92	13,883	44,042	31 5
1992-93	17,785	53,688	33 1
1993-94	25,307	69,751	36 3
1994-95	29,068	82,674	35 2
1995-96 (*p)	36,470	1,06,465	34 3

*p for Provisional

Source Various issues of *Reserve Bank of India Bulletin*

TABLE 4
Growth Rate of Production, Employment and Exports of Small Scale Sector

	Production (at 1981-82 prices) (1)	*Employment (2)*	*Employment Elasticity (3) = 1/2*	*Export at current prices (4)*
1973-74 to 1980-81	11 1	8 7	0 78	15 0
1980-81 to 1990-91	10 5	5 8	0 55	18 6
1990-91 to 1995-96	7 3	4 0	0 55	14 9

4 On the production front, production of the small scale sector grew from Rs 28,060 crores in 1980-81 to Rs 1,55,340 crores in 1990-91 and further jumped to Rs 3,56,213 crores in 1995-96 The rate of growth of production measured at current prices works out to be 18 6 per cent during the 10-year period (1980-81 to 1990-91) and 18 0 per cent during the subsequent five-year period (1990-91 to 1995-96) Measured at 1981-82 prices, the growth of the SSI sector production works out to be 10 7 per cent for the period 1980-81 to 1990-91 and 7 25 per cent for the subsequent period 1990-91 to 1995-96

It may be emphasised that since the growth of employment, production and exports for the entire 15-year period (1980-81 to 1995-96) of the small scale sector is higher than that of the large and medium sectors, the case built-up by the so-called expert group headed by Abid Hussain in favour of dereservation does not stand the test of scrutiny Rather, it strengthens the belief that to achieve growth with equity, which is the central objective of the Ninth Plan, it would he advisable to develop the small scale sector as a major instrument of economic democracy

Thirdly, it would be of interest to examine the recommendation of the Committee to raise the investment limit of small scale units to Rs 3 crores and of the tiny units to Rs 25 lakhs It may be noted that the investment limit was raised in 1990 from Rs 35 lakhs to Rs 60 lakhs for the SSI units and for the tiny units from Rs 2 lakhs to Rs 5 lakhs The Committee has raised the investment limit of the tiny units to Rs 25 lakhs—five times—and of the SSI units from Rs 60 lakhs to Rs 3 crores—again five times One can understand raising the investment limit in view of the rise in prices But whereas the price index between May 1990 and May 1997 has risen by only

88 per cent, the justification for raising the investment limit by 500 per cent seems to be unsustainable

Fourthly, the Committee has recommended that the ceiling of equity participation by big business, Indian or foreign, fixed at 24 per cent in the Industrial Policy of 1991 should be removed The clear purpose of the Committee is to permit big business, Indian as well as foreign, to enter the small scale sector This will, in effect, destroy the market share of the SSI sector

Dr L C Jain, a former Member, Planning Commission, criticising the Committee states

> We need not abolish reservation Whatever may have been its merits, we have, in effect, obliterated the reservation system by a number of devices One such device has been the continuous revision of the definition of the small scale industry It defies logic that in a sector where 90 per cent of the units have investment below Rs 5 lakhs, the investment limit has been raised continuously On whose behalf is that done? Obviously, for one or two per cent of the top large units in the small sector
>
> Moreover, as shown by the study of Dr S K Goel, the large units have set up small units to poach on the resources of the small scale sector to get guaranteed credit Many units with less than Rs 2 lakhs investment actually meet the local demand of low-proced items for low income people When we talk of economies of scale, we are not obviously talking about these people

Permitting the large sector and foreign direct investment to make inroads into the small scale sector will only endanger the employment objective as also making the benefits of employment generated by the SSI sector available to the low income groups

Fifthly, the Committee, while pleading for deservation has stated

> The pace of expansion of exports in such important sectors as textiles and leather will be threatened because India is unable to supply large volumes of adequate quality within the required delivery time The problem will be accentuated when quantitative restrictions on imports in developed countries, such as those under MFA, are withdrawn

Here again, it would be necessary to have a close look at the data of exports of textiles and leather products Textiles include fabrics, manufactured and ready made garments, coir yarn and manufacturers, jute yarn and manufacturers and carpets The total exports of textiles increased from Rs 1614 crores in 1980-81 to Rs 8096 crores in 1990-91 and then shot up to Rs 26,865 crores in 1995-96 The annual growth rate of textile exports was of the order of 17 5 per cent during 1980-81 to 1990-91, but declined to 12 7 per cent during 1990-91 to 1995-96 The real reason for the decline of textile export growth is not reservation, as made out by the Committee, but the protectionist policies followed by developed countries, despite GATT and WTO The very fact that the issue of labour standards was raised and that Indian skirts were declared inflammable in the USA, only shows that the developed countries use one pretext or the other to restrict the imports of Indian textiles, since they can effectively compete in international markets The real issue is to attack the protectionist policies of the developed nations rather than doing that, Abid Hussain Committee pleads for dereservation of the small scale sector

Lastly, the Committee has noted that delayed payments by the large scale sector for the value of goods purchased from the SSIs is a major cause of sickness among these units While accepting that the Delayed Payments Act has not been effective, the Committee merely intends to develop a *'bill culture'* and suggests that in the annual accounts of large companies, information be provided on the statutory bass on the extent of accounts payable to the small enterprises It passes one's comprehension how these measures will be helpful to the SSIs

The annual accounts can show that payments have been made and that the outstanding bills are of recent months But the principals can delay payments for a period of six to nine months and can cause sickness to the SSI units Instead of suggesting some effective measures to implement the Delayed Payments Act, the Committee only talks of a 'bill culture'! If the solution was so simple, the government would have succeeded by now!!

TABLE 5
Export of Textiles and Leather Products

Rs crores

	1980-81	*1990-91*	*1995-96*
Leather Manufactures, Footwear & Leather Garments	390	2600	5790
(i) Textile Fabrics & Manufacturers	933	6832	24,149
(ii) Coir Yarn & Manufacturers	17	48	210
(iii) Jute Yarn & Manufacturers	330	296	621
(iv) Carpets	334	920	1885
Total Textiles (i to iv)	**1614**	**8096**	**26,865**

Average Annual Rate of Growth of Exports	*1980-81 to 1990-91*	*1990-91 to 1995-96*
Textiles	17 5	12 7
Leather & Manufacturers	20 9	17 8

Source Compiled and Computed from *Economic Survey (1996-97)*

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Following the Report of the Committee, the government dereserved 14 items, now reserved for manufacture by the SSI sector The dereserved items include rice milling, dal milling, poultry feed, vinegar, synthetic syrups, biscuits, ice-creams, a variety of automobile parts and corrugated paper and boards Besides this, the Finance Minister stated in his Budget Speech in February 1997 that out of the funds normally available to the SSI sector, 40 per cent will be reserved for units with investment in plant and machinery upto Rs 5 lakhs, 20 per cent for units with investment between Rs 5 lakhs and Rs 25 lakhs, and the remaining 40 per cent for the other SSI units

The government is faced with sharp and loud protests by the SSI sector against the Report of the Abid Hussain Committee—the so-called expert group The Union Industries Minister, M Maran, on February 13, 1997 made a statement that the government would soon call for a national debate on the issue and would proceed with dereservation only after scrutinising the feedback received from such an exercise

There is no need to keep the impressive list of 822 items under the reserved category for the SSI sector Sixty items in the reserved list account for 80 per cent of the total production Therefore, there are many items in the list which are merely showpieces The government may withdraw reservation of such items in which the SSIs have shown little interest, but should continue to protect those items which have shown promising results It is really unfortunate that the government has dereserved 14 such items which are among the most successful groups of products (60) in all respects They should not have been dereserved

The last Census of the SSI sector revealed that production of reserved items accounted for 28 3 per cent of the total production of the SSI sector Already the SSIs are competing in a large area with the medium and large sectors The need of the hour is to provide further support to this sector which contributes nearly 34 per cent in exports and is a major contributor in employment generation and industrial production There is no need to facilitate the MNCs and Indian big business to make serious inroads in the SSI sector The function of a welfare state is to enable the weak to survive This was the basis of Industrial Policy of 1956 towards the SSI sector and there is no need to change the basic pillars of this policy

The view of the Committee that the Central Government should confine its role to policy formulation, legal and institutional development and in future, the responsibility of development of the SSEs should be largely on the States, needs reconsideration Mere formulation of policy is not enough Unless the Central Government works on matching the grant principle technique and contributes towards funding, it would not be possible to play an effective role in persuading the States to follow the policy guidelines ■

MEDIA

Indian Democracy and Liberalisation of the Media

URVASHI DHAMIJA and SHEFALI JHA

The following is a report on the proceedings of a seminar held in March It could not be published earlier due to space constraints However, in view of the persisting relevance of the issues discussed in the present context it is being belatedly presented for the benefit of our readers In fact the discussion on some of the subjects under scrutiny—like the Prasar Bharati Bill—had an impact on subsequent developments The authors, both teachers in Miranda House, University of Delhi, belong to the Department of Political Science

An enduring feature of public life in recent years has been the enhanced interface between the media and ordinary people The hastening of the liberalisation process since 1991 found a parallel in the media—in the collapse of Doordarshan's monopoly, the advent of multiple channel based television, the emergence of new glitzy formats for newspapers and magazines, and the explosion of innovative forms of infotainment by both the electronic and print media The convergence of technologies in broadcasting and communication and conflicting perspectives on how this development should be regulated to maintain a free flow of information consonant with the Indian reality, has evoked from the present government a commitment towards the enactment of a whole range of measures which includes the Broadcast Bill, the Prasar Bharati Bill, the Right to Information Bill, and legislation on opening up the satellite communication sector Against this background, the proceedings of a seminar on "Democracy in India and the Liberalisation of the Media", held in Miranda House on March 4 and 5, 1997, are specially relevant

The participants of the seminar spoke on diverse topics such as transparency in public policy, the media as an instrument of cultural imperialism, and a new regulatory policy for the media Their presentations, however, produced a common analytical framework for understanding the liberalisation of the media they agreed on a) monopoly being an abuse, whether encountered at the economic, political or cultural level, and b) on democratic systems containing players not just in the two realms of market and state but also in a third—civil society It followed then that a democratic state intervenes against monopolistic tendencies not only in the market but also enables the institutions of civil society to counter the concentration of resources in its own hands The media is an important part of civil society A democratic government cannot, in the name of regulating the media, or of ensuring the media's relaying of culturally diverse programmes, curtail its independence vis a vis the state Successive Indian Governments of the 1990s have trumpeted the existence of a liberalised media in this country and emphasised the need for a regulatory framework The seminarists looked at what these governments have actually done—unfortunately, behind the rhetoric, a dismal picture emerges

First, behind the claims of a free and liberalised media lie many hidden controls on the oldest Indian media—the print media Uptil March 1997, no government of the 1990s had even considered lifting the restrictions on newsprint import Control on the regional press is easily exercised by local and district level government agencies as they are its sole advertising clients Not only are there these governmental constraints, journalists often fail in their attempt to disseminate anti-government information in the face of opposition from the owners of the print media Second, while charging that at least the electronic media is without any controls whatsoever, the government made no attempt to speedily make Doordarshan and All India Radio—that part of the electronic media with the widest audience—autonomous the Prasar Bharati Bill, even with its shortcomings, was not notified, till seven years after it was passed in 1990, and even though it is to come into effect on September 15 this year, the supposedly autonomous Prasar Bharati Corporation has been shackled by being under the supervision of at least two parliamentary committees Third, the law relating to the media that has been introduced in Parliament—the Broadcast Bill—is full of shortcomings

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BEGINNING the proceedings, in an historical overview of the theme of the seminar, veteran journalist Nikhil Chakravartty said that while newspapers in the West started out by being partisan instruments of a "lord here and a merchant house there", in India they were conditioned at the outset by the broad compulsions of the freedom movement, which required not only criticism of the government but also reflection on the plight and aspirations of ordinary citizens After independence, especially in the earlier years, although newspapers were exhorted to be unsparing in their critiques, in practice they were under pressure, both from the judiciary as well as the executive, to be compliant through such measures as newsprint and advertisement policies and contempt of court orders Matters came to a head during the Emergency when as many as 253 journalists were detained Liberalisation or the loosening of government controls has meant the expansion of the technological capacity of the print and the electronic media to reach out to a larger audience The task of communication of those who man it is not, however, an easy task as compared to earlier times Given the volatile condition of politics, government restrictions seem unavoidable There is in addition irresistible pressure from business houses which own newspapers to subordinate the reporting of facts to the goal of making the paper a commercial success

In his paper, "Congress and the Liberalisation of the Media", Sanjaya Baru, a former Senior Editor of *The Times of India*, said that no political party was willing to forego whatever means it had to "control how journalists should think and proprietors should behave" He mentioned how though there was a categorical policy since 1955 banning foreign ownership of the print media, the application of the *Financial Express* for a tie-up with *Business Standard* was kept pending by the dominant faction of the ruling Congress party, because it was likely to send positive signals to future investors and keep major domestic newspapers "on a short leash"

Since the early nineties, he felt, India had become increasingly integrated into the world market The leading lights of the print media had reacted to this development by promoting a world view in which the only relevant basis for oneness and unity was an ease with Western knowledge, thought structures and cultural fare Baru mentioned how at *The Times of India* he was hauled up for designing a year-long programme of articles called 'Nation at Fifty' What 'nation', he was asked? In a post-nationalist world, one could say, 'India at Fifty', but not 'nation'

Baru felt that today democracy's goals could be promoted if both the management and the journalists had a "professional" approach By this he meant tolerance of different world views at the editorial level, and honesty on the part of those who wrote for the paper He was convinced that an India-centred perspective was viable and that the English language was a powerful means for giving it expression He rejected the view that the English press spoke for a small Westernised elite while the regional press spoke for Bharat and the masses English was as much an Indian language as any other, as the division between the pro- and anti-Mandalites in the press in all languages showed

Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution which guarantees freedom of speech and expression to the media also states grounds such as public order on which restrictions can be imposed Within this framework it is logical to expect that since people are the masters of those who use public resources, in case there is an adverse policy, at least an explanation should be available The practical problems encountered by the villagers of four districts of Rajasthan in extracting accountability (*hamara paisa, hamara hisab*) from the State administration responsible for implementing development programmes, culminated in a campaign for a model bill on the right to information Ms Nitya Ramakrishnan, who assisted in drafting one such Bill, said that information for the purpose of a legal right meant "any fact relating to the affairs of the public body and included any of the records relating to its affairs" In practice it meant, "the right to inspect, take notes and extracts and receive certified copies of the documents of a public body" Ms Ramakrishnan was emphatic that a public body should mean not only a state department but also a corporate body, whether owned and controlled by the government or private individuals, if public interest was adversely affected Restrictions upon disclosure were justified if covered by the Constitution, but there needed to be a direct nexus between the act of disclosure and damage to public interest This meant that departmental communication, by and large, should be available for public scrutiny A public body should be required to notify to the general public, before the commencement of any activity, any matter within its knowledge likely to damage life, health and livelihood prospects and should be fined for delay in providing information

Dunu Roy, a chemical engineer by training and a social activist, was of the view that the struggle for the right to information needed a focus on 'right' information This called for scepticism of initiatives highlighted by the mainstream media and government departments to "inform and educate" people In Delhi, for instance, industries were closed down for polluting the environment, when the Pollution Control Board's figures indicated that 68 per cent of the pollution was due to two and three wheeled vehicles

> Day in and day out, the media highlights the killer bus, when the major killer is the two wheeler

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On the relation between the absence of the right to information and foreign policy, C Uday Bhaskar, Deputy Director in the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), said that though rules like the one by which secret documents could not be declassified for fifty years rather than thirty years, as in the West, were an obstacle to independent thinking, the powerful hold of received wisdom was also a major deterrent In the late fifties and early sixties, he felt that though the media had ably critiqued the prevailing debate about self-reliance in its global context, it could not do so to its domestic dimension In the case of India adopting a distinct position on the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, he felt a major reason was the vigour with which the debate about signing it was carried in leading newspapers Baru said that the US Ambassador had specifically identified the former Director of the IDSA, and now a free-lance journalist, K Subrahmanyam, as a major obstacle in mobilising support for the US point of view in India

Senior journalist Harish Chandola was wary of the campaign of the right to information leading to a legal framework, at either the State or national level which was acceptable to either the villagers or social activists at the grassroot level who had pioneered the movement through such innovative methods as *jan-sunwais* or people's hearings in Rajasthan It is significant that the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan should have felt compelled to organise protest dharnas and observe June 7 as a *vaide khilafi* or breach of promise day due to the Chief Minister's non-cooperative attitude

If unequal economic and political structures have hampered the democratic potential of the media, then has its technological character reinforced this trend, especially as the electronic media is fast pushing the print media into the background? Professor Dinesh Mohan of the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi said that the technology of television assumed large passive audiences which meant that its messages perforce had to be simple and short Complex and nuanced viewpoints could not possibly be adequately projected Television was ideal for product promotion and entertainment Professor George Koreth, a consultant in human resource development, said given the high cost, the risk factor in new programmes could be neutralised only by opting for a package that had mass appeal In connection with the diversity of views which satellite television supposedly made possible, veteran journalist Chanchal Sarkar noted that no owner could afford to offend the ruling government Murdoch removed BBC from Star's transmission to China when the government there found its programme offensive

However, as a member of the audience pointed out, had not satellite television given a fillip to innovative programmes like *Helpline* and *Aap ki Adalat* which put government on the defensive? Did this not mean that despite the technological constraint television could be harnessed for sensitising people about their potential and facilitating their empowerment?

Professor Mohan responded that though technology was global fifty years ago, over the years it had become deglobalised inasmuch as its creative impulse was now located in the West and the rest of the world was by and large a consumer Undoubtedly, a section of the professionals in the non-Western world, whether in industry, academia, finance, sports and entertainment contributed to this but it remained indifferent to the needs of the overwhelming numbers of the non-elite in a Third World country Currently the Direct to Home (DTH) transmission based on the K-U Band, was being promoted The clear images and audio-signals from a choice of as many as hundred channels could not only enhance the bonds of a transnational elite but also strengthen narrow solidarities based on region and language and generate a sense of alienation from national level problems like poverty Further, studies had shown that information exposure via the electronic media had a temporary impact Besides visual familiarity with scenes of public outrage which is routine publicity material in a democracy could brutalise sensibilities It was indeed true that the opposition viewpoint got more coverage in the media in the present than ever before However, since it was juxtaposed with a pro-government position and there was never adequate time for a convincing rebuttal the end result was enhanced credibility for official policy Professor Mohan felt that television should be avoided altogether With the help of the Xeroxing machine and face-to-face interaction, a nascent social movement to promote an alternative policy could very well gather momentum

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The second day of the seminar began with a panel on 'Cinema and the Message of Indian Nationalism' The issue under review was whether Indian films, through their advocacy of a certain sort of nationalism, had strengthened Indian democracy in the sense of demanding equal rights for all kinds of Indian citizens, or have they equated nationalism with majoritarianism

The first speaker of this panel, Ms Rashmi Doraiswamy from Jamia Millia University, argued that cinema in India has always been, right from its very inception, linked to the nationalist enterprise The father of Indian cinema, Dadasaheb Phalke, made a series of films on Indian mythology in the 1930s and 1940s to bring back Indian images not in the revivalist sense which we know today, but as a positive contribution to the nationalist struggle Till the 1960s Indian cinema made use of nationalist themes, but since then such motifs have become restricted to parallel cinema while commercial cinema has become increasingly puerile Ms Nikhat Kazmi said that contemporary commercial cinema has concentrated on pulp patriotism and pulp nationalism, offering facile, inane and romantic solutions to communal problems or on how to knit the haves and have nots together This kind of nationalism always presents the other as a devilish enemy Ms Doraiswamy had earlier made the point that in commercial cinema to some extent we find what is rampant in the electronic media that is, a counterposing of the regional identity, usually Haryanvi or Bihari, to an international one modelled on Western pop music and making fun of the regional identity In this interface the nationalist project is lost

Analysing the charge of the media being an agent of cultural imperialism, eminent writer Manohar Shyam Joshi said that it is always the culture of that group which controls economic and political power that is dominant Since power is in the hands of the Westernised elite in India, not surprisingly, it is Western culture that is dominant on the electronic medium In fact it is the electronic medium that is responsible for the speed at which the hegemony of Western culture is being established now Because of the influence of Western programmes on Indian television, a strange homogenisation has taken place—for example, everyone wears T-shirts and jeans instead of local clothing One of the purposes of the liberalisation of the media was to give voice to local cultures and local idioms instead, an Americanised pop culture seems to have ridiculed away the integrity of all local ways of life In spite of this, the problem in a democratic set-up is that the solution cannot be the banning of television Some other democratic way out is needed

Sadanand Menon, formerly of *The Times of India*, reiterated Joshi's stand He spoke of the 'abdication of responsibility' of the India media, specially the Press, in spite of its illustrious origins The commercial aspect has begun to dominate the social function of the media and the owners of different media companies could not care less about relaying culturally vacuous programmes as long as the advertisements kept coming in Menon characterised the consumers of the media as 'media victims' and underlined the need for a consumer resistance movement against the current media In the discussion that followed he also suggested that citizens groups could use the new technology available to make alternative media programmes Since the technology was changing so quickly, many old pieces of equipment were just lying around in storage If this equipment could be acquired cheaply by citizens' cooperatives, then it could be used to make better programmes—he gave the example of a group in Holland

Ms Rupal Oza analysed the idea of cultural imperialism through a critique of the media coverage of the Miss World pageant in Bangalore

J S Yadava of the Indian Institute of Mass Communication said that the media was a neutral medium and could be used both for progressive or reactionary purposes He believed that the control over the media was not just a reflection of economic or political power, but that it was an independent form of power—to illustrate he pointed out that in any financial year, 40 to 48 per cent of the total foreign exchange America earned came from its culture industry He said that he believed it was possible for citizens to gain access to the media and use the new interactive and converging media technologies for specially educational and health purposes

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THE seminar concluded with a discussion on 'Recent Changes in Communication Technology and a Policy Framework for the Media' Vivian Fernandes of Asia Business News, looking at recent government proposals for media regulation, called the Broadcast Bill 'a nasty piece of legislation' for introducing extensive licensing restrictions as well as a ban on cross-media ownership In fact, the Bill which talks of seven different categories of licenses within the electronic media, lays down that even these categories are exclusive of each other Fernandes said that this would only restrict competition by making entry harder Instead control should be exercised by giving uplinking facilities to broadcasters from within the country This would also have the advantage of generating much-needed revenue for the country

Ashutosh from *Aaj Tak* agreed with Vivian on the danger of allowing the government to regulate the electronic media He gave many examples of how his programme is censored because it is relayed on Doordarshan he was not allowed to, in a feature on the law and order situation in Uttar Pradesh, broadcast a statement by the DGP of UP that the law and order position was unsatisfactory

Karnik of Discovery Channel described some of the new media technologies that have made "cyber-communities—communities of the mind which share ideas and not physical space" possible With a small dinner-sized plate one can now, through Direct to Home television, bypass cable operators and receive hundreds of channels from all over the world in one's home With a tiny cellular phone-like instrument, or as it is called, a 'mobile satellite phone' it is possible to send signals to all parts of the world Ms Sevanti Ninan also gave the example of Internet, which allows individual consumers to receive from, and send signals the world over Given the possibility of such cyber-communities, as well as the convergence of different media, such that newspapers were now available on Internet, the government has failed to come up with an innovative media policy

Karnik argued that the Broadcast Bill had failed even in the three traditional goals of such legislation encouraging diversity, competitiveness and serving the citizens The Bill did not contain any provision to cater to the needs of the 75 per cent of the Indian citizens who do not have access to any media Karnik also criticised the Bill for not separating the referee from the players

Ms Sevanti Ninan, columnist for *The Hindu* and *The Indian Express* spoke on the Internet She regretted that the Indian Government had adopted a policy of being the monopoly provider, through VSNL, of the Internet service, and that getting the service was expensive so that the number of people with access to it in India was not yet 50,000 Since one could access debates in Parliament, as well as chat with some Members of Parliament who were online, the government should work to ensure that more Indians could log online

Dr N Bhaskar Rao said that in the name of regulating media companies, the government was unfairly trying to control the content of the media and thus interfere with the freedom of information of the citizens The government was going against the spirit of the 1995 judgement of the Supreme Court which had ruled that the

> broadcasting media should be under the control of the public as distinct from the government '

He also criticised the structure of the proposed Broadcast Authority of India It should not have as its members four Secretaries from the Government of India, since that would undermine its autonomy Instead, it should be headed by a committee of media experts, with experience in the media Most of the speakers were agreed that the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting should be abolished

In fact Dr Bhaskar Rao's words captured the message of the seminar

> Liberalisation should not mean shifting from the monopoly of the state to the monopoly of the markets The need is to end both monopolies We must shift from the state or government point of view and from the market towards centering or in favour of the citizen
>
> We need to set up studios where all kinds of ordinary people can walk in and make programmes thus really ensuring diversity in the media ■

Covering a National Calamity

G.S. BHARGAVA

The Delhi tragedy, in which as many as twenty-eight school children, of ages ranging from five to twelve, were drowned to death when the bus carrying them to school plunged into the Yamuna was news in every sense of the term. It would make any news-person sit up but did not apparently stir the government media, Doordarshan and Akashvani, sufficiently to shed their bureaucratic approach to handling the spot news. The story broke at about eight in the morning. The morning newspapers, in Delhi and elsewhere, could carry it only the following day. But not the electronic media. The BBC bulletin at 9.30 AM reported it as news from Delhi while the Akashvani bulletin half-an-hour later rightly led with it. Having done so, it dispensed with the story routinely in a minute to revert to political news. If it had happened in Britain or the US the TV networks would have treated it as 'breaking news' and stuck to it for hours on end. It was no doubt of primarily Delhi interest in the sense that the victims were locals. But it was also a national calamity. The foreign news agencies picked it up because of its human interest, death by drowning of so many schoolchildren, boys and girls.

As the day progressed, and Akashvani and Doordarshan pursued the story with more details but with stereotypes like VVIPs visiting the site of the disaster or otherwise voicing their grief vying for space with information which the public was more interested in. It is customary for press officers of Ministers to churn out the usual messages on such occasions but they are not news. Even announcement of monetary compensation to the next of kin of the dead kids has a casual, if not a cynical, ring about it. Pranoy Roy's nightly news bulletin on Star TV, for instance, would not mention them. If the government media have to live up to the change in the offing on account of the launching of the Prasar Bharati Corporation, they have to get rid of the hackneyed style of news reporting.

The daily newspapers the next day, rightly, rose to the occasion shoving the usual political stories off the front page which was full of pictures and reports of the tragedy. The *Deccan Herald*, for instance, had a colour picture on the front page of a police diver bringing ashore the body of a child. Other upcountry newspapers also did not treat the tragedy as of purely Delhi interest.

Incidentally, according to a friend who has reason to be knowledgeable in the matter, the monetary compensation announced on such occasions is very often for the record. In this case, for instance, it is said that by the time the parents recover from the shock of loss of their dear ones and set out to claim the compensation, bureaucratic barriers and interminable paper-work put them off. They are asked to produce all kinds of documents and made to run from pillar to post. It is worse than realising insurance money, the friend said. It will be useful if the newspapers can pursue the matter and tell us how soon and how many of the claimants get the money in their hands.

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If the National Press Day seminar in New Delhi on 'Fifty Years of Press in India', organised by the Press Council of India alongwith the Indian Institute of Mass Communication and the Press Institute of India, did not end up as a routine exercise in mouthing platitudes, it is mainly because of the untiring Chairman of the Press Council of India, Justice P.B. Sawant. In his Presidential address, Justice Sawant put the topic in perspective by highlighting three 'seen and unseen, pernicious and dangerous trends attacking the freedom of the press from outside and inside'. He identified them as elitism, commercialism and corruption.

It is not always that elitism is recognised as a drawback of the press. It is the tendency, especially among the metropolitan newspapers, to go in for juicy stories about the elites, not much relevant to even the upper crust in our society. They are usually picked up from foreign publications. Very often they crowd out more relevant, even if less 'sexy', news. Worse still, they set the style for others on the plea that the young readers have no stomach for serious political and other stories. It is true to the extent that endless expatiation on political goings-on, very often with many of the newspapers covering the same ground, puts off readers, not only the youth. A reprieve from politics is welcome in that sense. But filling the space with titillating tid-bits is neither information nor education.

For instance, acres of newsprint have gone into dilation of the power struggle within the Congress party with the opponents of Sitaram Kesri using the Jain Commission interim report as a handle to corner the party President. Not to be left out, the weeklies dole out their quota of rigmarole. At the end of the day, what is the sum total of insight for the reader, except for an embellishment of a fact here or a witticism there Vinod Mehta's *Outlook*, for instance, quotes friends' of the President, K R Narayanan, on his personal virtues to celebrate his rejection of the Union Cabinet's advice on sacking the Kalyan Singh Government in Uttar Pradesh as if it was a display of an outstanding personal trait and nothing else In contrast, R K Laxman's 'You said it' shows a conclave of Congress leaders with one of them saying "I am a bit confused Are we discussing withdrawal of support to UF or Kesri?"

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TALKING of the interim report of the Jain Commission, the *India Today* is perhaps justifiably happy that the selective excerpts it had published of the Commission's conclusions have been substantiated The report tabled in the two Houses of Parliament contains the quotes But the question has been not about the authenticity of the magazine's version but the ethics of disclosing them and how it got hold of the document Others, including the daily newspapers, have been recycling them since then trying to shine in the reflected glory of the 'scoop' That the issue of the journal which carried the explosive quotes also had a photograph of Justice Jain with Prabhu Chawla, the author of the 'journalistic coup', has given rise to suspicion that the story came from the horse's mouth Demands for investigation into the leak have been based on it But it is more for the Commission than the publication to disprove the charge One cannot fault a journalist for having won the confidence of his or her source for blowing the whistle

Nevertheless, Prabhu Chawla's contention that since the government has been sitting on the report submitted by the Commission "just two months ago", is not valid The law allows six months after the receipt of such reports for tabling them with or without the 'action taken report' Secondly, the ongoing winter session of Parliament is the first sitting of the national legislature after the Home Minister got the report in late August—following the special session of the two Houses to mark the golden jubilee of our independence

As for the ethics of the disclosure, only a few days earlier, Chief Justice J S Verma pictorially depicted what he called 'a useful test to regulate the content of media reports' in the course of his first Kotamraju Rama Rao memorial lecture in New Delhi That was on the occasion of the birth centenary of the great editor on November 9 last The picture shows a serpent with the title 'the snake that poisons everybody' It reads in part "Before you repeat a story ask yourself Is it true? Is it fair? Is it necessary? If not shut up" Before stressing that a journalist 'must not file any report which does not satisfy the test', the Chief Justice prophetically included 'toppling governments' among the consequences of irresponsible exercise of the freedom of the press

Finally, while *The Economic Times* has been voicing scepticism about public response to the Finance Minister's voluntary disclosure of income scheme, *The Deccan Chronicle* had an interesting story of opulent Hyderabad women queuing up before designated jeweler shops to declare their gold ornaments

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A recent seminar in Delhi organised by the Press Institute of India saw lively interaction between senior journalists and officials of the External Affairs Ministry Pawan Verma, who had assumed the thankless job of spokesman of the Ministry only the day before, was present and participated in the discussion Neither the topic of the seminar, external publicity and foreign policy, nor the introductory paper by Chanchal Sarkar suggested that the spotlight would centre on the mechanics of external publicity to the virtual neglect of the institutional and conceptual aspects of external publicity Not much attention was paid to point stressed by Chanchal-*da* that since the

> end of the Indian Service of Information there are no knowledgeable specialists either in culture or in information and that there is very little difference between what an political officer and an information officer in an embassy set out to do

The practice has been of Indian Foreign Service officers of the rank of Joint Secretary, with or without earlier experience of handling publicity, being made spokesmen of the Ministry to train themselves on the job There have been, no doubt, success stories like M S Sivaramakrishnan ('Siva' as we called him) and J N (Mani) Dixit but they do not prove the rule Siva was a journalist by temperament and outlook even if he opted for the IFS Mani Dixit had earned his spurs as an extremely successful Director of the Indian Council of Cultural Relations He has been more a professional than a bureaucrat

To cite a relatively trivial issue, it was said that during the Prime Minister's visit to New York last month and his meetings with the US President and his Pakistani opposite number neither the spokesman nor the Foreign Secretary was sensitive to the 'deadline' of the Indian journalists covering the visit So they took their own time to brief the correspondents who had until then to fend for themselves, drawing on what the American and Pakistani journalists had been told by their countries' spokespersons

What to tell the press in the light of their professional needs and what not to tell without clamming up cannot be learnt overnight It has to be gained through practice Siva, for instance, would post us with the full background of the event, stressing the Indian perspective and even take us into confidence about certain aspects which had better left unsaid He would take into account what the other party was highlighting and help us in lending a national perspective to the story After all, covering an event of bilateral importance like negotiations with a foreign government or delicate talks between heads of government is not like reporting a domestic event and no journalist is shy of bringing slant to bear on his or her work, without straying from the truth

Of course, journalists holding sensitive posts like that of the Press Counsellor have botched it by what may be called undiplomatic conduct I had experience of one who as the Press Counsellor in Colombo during the 1962 India-China border conflict had found himself completely at sea I will not name him because he is no more He was naturally concerned that the Sinhalese newspapers, especially, in the island projected the Beijing point of view to present India as the victim of its own provocative actions The Indian maps of the border were hardly published So he had invited the editors of leading publications for a fairly lavish dinner and succeeded in getting most of them to accept the invitation At the end of the meal, however, he muffed it completely saying 'Friends, now that we have eaten, I would request you to present the Indian version of the dispute', and handed round the kits prepared with the background material and copies of the maps

Naturally, they did not like it, with some of them blurting out to his face that it sounded like a *quid pro quo* But because the *faux pas* was not deliberate not much damage was ultimately done

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MEANWHILE, a colleague has pulled me up for not noticing that *The Times of India,* of all newspapers, had omitted to mention that the abortive Cabinet decision on Uttar Pradesh last month mooted dissolution of the State Assembly also It merely said that dismissal of the Kalyan Singh Government and imposition of President's Rule under Article 356 of the Constitution had been recommended The constitutional provision, I am told, does not automatically imply dissolution of the legislature

All other reports, including those of the agencies, highlighted it For instance, the *Deccna Herald* which carried its own bureau story—notwithstanding the fact that it was nearly midnight when the news broke—had a double-decker headline It read 'Assembly to be dissolved, Kesri, Mulayam have their way, President's Rule in UP'

It was a case of missing the wood for the trees on my part, it seems The BJP contention that the prospect of dissolution of the Assembly had driven the defectors into its embrace would have been knocked out if sending the legislature packing was not part of the package

Similarly, Sitaram Kesri's speech in Calcutta warning dissidents in the Congress had an unusual dimension It was clubbing together the Communists, the BJP and the RSS to charge that "they have planted their own men inside the Congress to ruin it from within", as the *Deccan Herald* correspondent put it explicity, giving the quote

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AMONG other interesting news stories missed by many newspapers was a PTI report in *The Hindu* It said when militants tried to kidnap a CPI-M activist from his house at Seer-Kanligund village in Anantnag district of Jammu and Kashmir the villagers foiled the attempt and drove the terrorists away I don't think there have been many instances of the people braving the terrorists, even if they might not have been cooperating with them as in the past

For instance, the Vice-Chancellor of Kashmir University, Mushir-ul-Haq, a highly respected scholar, had been abducted from his residence in Srinagar in 1990 and killed in cold blood The people were no doubt outraged by the crime but nobody had even tried to save him On the other hand, when some of the present-day Hurriyat Conference leaders blamed the security forces for the murder there was no popular protest as during the killing of the Mir Waiz of South Kashmir, also at Anantnag, a few years later

The Excelsior report that the Kashmir University has decided to institute a Mushir-ul-Haq Chair for Islamic Studies is significant Only a Sufi saint and Allama Iqbal have been similarly honoured by the university earlier

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ALSO, while the Guwahati High Court's rejection of the applications for anticipatory bail of three Tata Tea executives, including the Managing Director, R K Krishna Kumar, was widely reported and prominently too, *The Telegraph* followed the story It reported on the following day that the Assam police have 'discounted the possibility of the arrest' of the executives It quoted the State Director-General of Police, Harishikeshan, as saying

> We will go by the requirements of the investigation and arrest people only if necessary There is no need for anybody to get paranoid in view of the court ruling

Interesting, considering that *The Hindustan Times* report of the rejection of the applications said it 'paved the way' to their arrest It was also the case when the Supreme Court had some time ago turned down a similar plea by the former Chief Minister of Bihar, Laloo Prasad Yadav ■

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS (NOVEMBER 16-22, 1997)

NATIONAL

November 16

- Senior Congress leader Arjun Singh indicates in New Delhi that under certain circumstances Congress can join the United Front Government He says the "time has come when there is need for a very frank and deep dialogue between the Congress and the United Front, not just acting and reacting when some thing happens"
- Assam Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mohanta expresses surprise over the leakage of classified communication between the CBI and the government He says a section of the CBI is under pressure from political leaders and business houses to implicate him in the multi-crore Letter of Credit (LOC) scam in the State's Veterinary and Animal Husbandry Department
- BJP General Secretary M V Naidu says in Chennai that his party demands a "comprehensive White Paper" from the Centre detailing the link-up between various governments at the Centre and in Tamil Nadu, and the LTTE
- Bihar Planning and Development Minister Vikram Kuer releases documents and alleges that Railway Minister Ram Vilas Paswan purchased land worth several lakhs for a paltry sum of Rs 1 5 lakh

November 17

- BJP President L K Advani, in a meet-the-press programme at the Bangalore Press Club, says his party is keeping its options open on forming a government at the Centre as the Gujral Government is counting its "last hours" He reveals that some Congressmen approached his colleagues and asked "Why are you talking about mid-term elections?" "They asked us why can't you form the government," he adds
- Visiting Romanian President Emil Constantinescu and Prime Minister Gujral hold wide-ranging talks on bilateral and global issues The two countries sign agreements on investment promotion and protection, on cooperation in science and technology and cultural exchanges
- Former UP Chief Minister Ms Mayawati says BSP lawyer and former Advocate General Umesh Chandra is filing a petition in the High Court to direct the UP Assembly Speaker to take action against the 13 defecting MLAs under the anti-defection law within a set time-frame
- Congress Parliamentary Party meets in the Capital with 102 MPs of the total 225 attending and questioning the Leader of the CPP Sitaram Kesri's move to seek, in camera through the General Secretaries, their opinion about what stand to take on the Jain Commission Report when the Parliament session opens on November 19

November 18

- A school bus packed with 120 children (designed to carry only 55) crashes off the Wazirabad Bridge in Delhi and plunges into the river Yamuna As many as 29 children are killed and the rest injured and shocked, all the children are aged between six and 17
- US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright arrives in New Delhi, accompanied by her adviser on Tibet Gregory Craig, to consolidate the ongoing Indo-US strategic dialogue and lay the groundwork for the proposed visit to India of US President Bill Clinton early next year
- Congress Members of Parliament are reported to favour withdrawal of support to the Gujral Government if the DMK, allegedly indicted by the Jain Commission's interim report on the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, is not eased out of the United Front Government
- Addressing the Seventieth Annual General Meeting of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), Prime Minister I K Gujral outlines a targeted increase in gross investment of 28-30 per cent and opening up of the infrastructure sectors to domestic and foreign investment in order to achieve a sustainable growth of seven per cent in the next six years

November 19

- Twenty three people, including a six-member crew of a TV network and a journalist, are killed and 38 others are injured, among them expelled Telegu Desam party member Mohanbabu and former Andhra Pradesh Minister Paritala Ravi, when a stationary Fiat car explodes, possibly triggered by a remote control, on Jubilee Hills in Hyderabad, when Mohanbabu, lead actor in a film produced by Paritala Ravi, and Ravi were returning from the Mahurat of the film
- BJP leader Atal Behari Vajpayee calls on President K R Narayanan and reportedly urges him not to accept the UF Government's recommendation if it opts for dissolution of the Lok Sabha Vajpayee tells newspersons "the option to form a government was open yesterday and is open even today"
- Congress President Sitaram Kesri, addressing a rally to observe the birth anniversary of Indira Gandhi, appeals to Mrs Sonia Gandhi to take over the leadership of the party
- Former US President Jimmy Carter is awarded the 1997 Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development
- US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright "after substantive discussions" with Prime Minister Gujral cuts short her visit and rushes to Geneva for urgent talks with Russian, British and French Foreign Ministers prior to an UN Security Council meeting on the Iraq crisis

November 20

- Congress Working Committee officially decides to withdraw support to the UF Government if it fails to drop the DMK Ministers The CWC authorises Congress President Sitaram Kesri to meet Prime Minister Gujral and take immediate necessary action A letter to this effect is delivered to the Prime Minister
- Congress MPs stall the proceedings in both the Houses of Parliament on the demand that the DMK be dropped from the UF Government, and force adjournments of the Houses
- DMK leader and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Karunanidhi says "We have done nothing wrong, our conscience is clear and there is no valid reason for our Ministers to quit the UF Government"

- Union Home Minister Indrajit Gupta's remarks in the Lok Sabha that he was very perturbed about the leak of the Jain Commission's interim report and his apprehension that may be the judge himself was responsible for it angers Congress MPs and they create an uproar over what they call "baseless allegations"
- **November 21** Bihar Government finally agrees to pay the State Secretariat staff at per with the revised pay scale of the Union Government in accordance with the recommendations of the Fifth Pay Commission and the staff end their 57-day old strike
- DMK decides to take Jain Commission's findings to court on the ground that the report exceeded its jurisdiction by delving into the "security aspects" and has cast "unsubstantiated" aspersions
- Congress General Secretary Tariq Anwar, commenting on the UF decision not to drop the DMK from the Council of Ministers, says "We will decide after we get a formal communication from the Front"
- President of the Palestinian Authority Yasser Arafat, on a three-day state visit to India, says in New Delhi that he had twice warned Rajiv Gandhi of an international conspiracy to assassinate him
- UP Assembly Speaker Kesri Nath Tripathi accepts the plea of BSP rebel MLAs to give them more time and asks them to submit their replies to the show cause notice issued on BSP leader Mayawati's demand to disqualify them as defectors, by November 26
- **November 22** Speaking at the seventyfifth anniversary celebrations of the Bengali daily *Ananda Bazar Patrika* at Calcutta, Prime Minister Gujral hints that mid-term polls were round the corner "In the elections in the 50th year of India's Independence," he says, "let's all join hands and cleanse the public life"
- Former Prime Minister VP Singh issues a 33-page point-by-point rebuttal of the Jain Commission report and says the six years of inquiry have gone waste He asserts "The judge could have just put his signature under the Congress affidavit"
- Senior Congress leader Arjun Singh accuses VP Singh of culpable negligence that directly led to the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi
- Chennai witnesses massive demonstrations protesting the allegations against the DMK in the Jain Commission report Leaders cutting across party lines denounce the Congress and the Commission and burn effigies of Justice Jain More than 3000 demonstrators, including Corporators and MLAs, are arrested by the police

INTERNATIONAL

- **November 16** Nepalese Anti-Terrorist Police arrests eight persons, including two women and a junior police officer, and seize nine leather packages marked "100 per cent genuine uranium made in the USA" and instruction "to be opened only in the laboratory"
- Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, in an interview with *The News*, Islamabad, alleges a 1993-type conspiracy to destabilise his government and to oust him
- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu arrives in Indianapolis (USA) to lobby for continued financial support and to ease the growing tension in the "who is a Jew" debate between the Orthodox and the Reform groups
- Chinese Justice Ministry confirms that the country's foremost dissident Wei Jiangsheng was released on medical parole and left for Detroit accompanied by a US official
- United States flies in more F-16 fighter jets and tanker planes to a Southern Turkish airbase Incirlik near the city Adna which was used in the 1991 Gulf war to launch air raids on Iraq
- **November 17** Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif appears before the five-judge bench of the Supreme Court headed by Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah in a contempt of court case filed against him and eleven others He does not tender any apology but asserts that he held the judiciary in highest esteem The hearing will continue on November 18 But Nawaz Sharif pulls a fast one An unscheduled late night session of Parliament amends the Contempt Law that a full bench of the Supreme Court, comprising all the 17 judges, must decide whether contempt charges are to be laid or not
- Muslim militants open indiscriminate fire on tourists outside an ancient temple in the Valley of the Queens in the Southern Egyptian town of Luxor, killing 61, mostly Swiss and Japanese sightseers Ten militants and three policemen are killed in the shootout when the militants' runaway vehicle is stopped by security men The assassins escape in the desert
- Iraqi President Saddam Hussain stresses that he does not want conflict with the US and offers to defuse the standoff if the weapons inspection is reorganised comprising impartial inspectors
- **November 18** Pakistan Army Chief General Jehangir Karamat abruptly cuts short his 10-day official visit to the UK and rushes back home in the wake of reports of a serious constitutional crisis in Islamabad
- Former Chief of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) General Hameed Gul tells New York magazine *Gentleman's Quarterly* that Mir Aimal Kansi, the Pakistani sentenced to death by a US jury for killing two CIA officials and injuring another three, was a CIA agent and worked for the agency both inside and outside Pakistan
- Egyptian Muslim group Al-Jihad threatens to carry out more attacks on tourists because they were adding their money to the regime's financial resources spent on torturing and killing the sons of the Islamic movement
- **November 19** Pakistan Supreme Court formally charges Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif with contempt of court plunging his government into a severe political-constitutional crisis
- Basing themselves on the latest amendment to the Constitution, Pakistan Parliamentary Affairs Minister Yasin Wattoo says Nawaz Sharif will go to appeal in the Supreme Court itself The appeal is to be heard by a bigger and different bench, that is, if the amendment receives the President's assent
- Former US President Jimmy Carter reiterates his offer to serve as an envoy to Iraq to help defuse the standoff between Baghdad and Washington over the UN arms inspection

Nirad Chaudhuri is Still the Greatest : Khushwant Singh

The following are the views of Khushwant Singh as spelt out in a recent interview We are publishing them here to mark Nirad C Chaudhuri's birth centenary which fell on November 23, 1997

Q Among the writers and intellectuals of India, no one knows Nirad Babu better than you Why did a certain class of intelligentsia despise him so much?

A The patriots felt his writings to be unpatriotic He wrote true but unkind things about India and went on to say all that is good was due to the British Later he wrote India is like Circe and the race of pigs But India is also a nation where rule of law and respect for democracy exists

Q You are on record stating to an American magazine that in non-fiction Nirad Chaudhuri is the greatest writer of India Can you please tell us who is the greatest writer today?

A He is the only writer in non-fiction No Indian can handle the language as he does He is the greatest stylist of English language we have ever had

Q Nirad Chaudhuri thinks he was abused till 1987 and a complete revolution has taken place since then Don't you think the vicissitude took place in 1992 when the British honoured him with the CBE?

A Even today he is abused I felt angry when he accepted the CBE He shouldn't have accepted the honour He is much above it Why don't they confer knighthood on him like they did on Naipaul

Q In the world today there are not many writers of his magnitude and that the Nobel Prize Committee has been unjust in overlooking him Your comments

A That's very difficult to answer For the Nobel Prize, a writer must write in his own language Naipaul has not been given because he wrote only in English On the other hand Tagore was honoured because he wrote Gitanjali in Bengali, of course it was translated later ■

(Interviewed by Ashok Patnaik)

November 20
- ➤ In a deal brokered by Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov, Iraq agrees to allow an extended team of the UN Arms Inspection Commission while Russia promises to work for ending the sanctions imposed on Iraq
- ➤ Pakistan President Farooq Ahmad Leghari refuses to give his assent to the amendment to the Constitution passed by the National Assembly and the Senate making it mandatory for a contempt of court case against higher dignities to be heard by a Bench comprising all the judges of the Supreme Court and giving the right of appeal to the accused if heard by a smaller Bench with the proviso that the appeal will be heard by judges not on the First Bench
- ➤ Pakistan Supreme Court suspends the amendment to the Constitution and instructs the President to not to give his assent
- ➤ Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan call off their scheduled visit to Bangladesh for a conference of entrepreneurs of the region because of their respective governments facing crises of their own
- ➤ US State Department warns Americans worldwide to exercise greater caution in view of the conviction of terrorists in the US and retaliatory attacks on American citizens abroad

November 21
- ➤ Pakistan Supreme Court adjourns for a week further hearing on two cases filed against Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif—one charging him for contempt of court and the other being a petition challenging the constitutional amendment passed by the government
- ➤ Pakistan Army Chief Gen Jehangir Karamat is reported to have dissuaded Nawaz Sharif from initiating impeachment proceedings against President Farooq Ahmad Leghari
- ➤ Gerhard Schroeder, the Social Democrat Minister President of Lower Saxony, slated by the polls to defeat German Chancellor Helmut Kohl in next year's national elections, calls for a new German-French-British Axis to "make it easier for smaller countries to accept the leadership role of the bigger states"

November 22
- ➤ Nils Carlstrom, the Swede who heads the Baghdad monitoring office of the UN Weapons Inspection team in Iraq, says all the monitors including the aerial inspection crews are conducting their work normally and the Iraqi officials at sites are extending full cooperation
- ➤ A World Bank report, released on the eve of the Kyoto Climate Change Conference, says India contributes only three per cent of global CO_2 emissions but this is expected to increase as its population touches the one billion mark and its economic development moves forward ■

Corrigendum

In the introduction to Amin Mughal's "Where Faiz Succeeds" on page 29 of *Mainstream* (November 22, 1997) it was printed that the article was a paper read out by the author "at a meeting held at the Faiz Academy, London (April 8, 1984)" Actually the meeting took place on April 8, 1994

This error is regretted *—Editor*

Posted at CPSO in New Delhi on November 28/29, 1997 **Delhi Postal REGD No DL-11037/97**
Licence No U-(C)-20/97 Licensed to Post without Prepayment Regd with Registrar of Newspapers of India under No RN 7064/62

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little bit
of SAIL
in everybody's
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Edited and published by Sumit Chakravartty *for* Perspective Publications Private Ltd, 145/1D, Shahpur Jat (First Floor), (Near Asiad Village), New Delhi-110049 *Printed at* New Delhi Printers, 20/7 Old Market,West Patel Nagar, New Delhi-110008 *Editor* Sumit Chakravartty *Editorial Adviser* Nikhil Chakravartty *Manager* Jasjit Kay Nagra

Mainstream

OL XXXV No 52 December 6,1997 Rs 7

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

Coalition Politics and Impending Poll

ARUN GHOSH

Rainbow in the Sky : Verdict on Shankar Guha Niyogi's Murder Trial

KULDIP NAYAR

Pakistan : My Latest Impressions

SUBHASH CHANDRA SARKER

CRB Scandal : Reserve Bank's Culpability

SWARAN SINGH

Sino-Japanese Ties : Past Legacy versus Future Vision

LEONARD A. GORDON'S ARTICLE—
"THE DEATH OF SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE"

Reinforcing South Asian Democracy

While the persisting political crisis at the Centre fuels cynicism about the viability of our democratic values and traditions already under siege due to the machinations of vested interests who have criminalised and desensitised our polity in such a manner that even the growing bloody upper-caste massacres (as in Bihar's Jehanabad now on the lines of Bathani Tola sometime back) rarely evoke mass revulsion, democratic forces in India can take heart from the latest happenings in our neighbouring state of Pakistan

For several days when the political drama was unfolding in Pakistan—punctuated as it was by the clash between the President, the Prime Minister and the Supreme Court Chief Justice, as also the intra-judiciary conflict there—what was uppermost in the minds of the Indian public in general (who, despit all misgivings, continue to nurture deep sympath and affection for their Pakistani brethren) wa whether that country was heading towards anothe spell of military rule The fact that that danger ha been averted with the President of the Islamic Republi of Pakistan stepping down following moves by th ruling combination in the National Assembly to ge him impeached is a matter of relief and satisfactior But more than that it marks a victory for democrac as it underscores the sovereignty of parliament tha both the outgoing President and the displaced Chie Justice had sought to undermine by their blatar attempts to restore the dreaded Eighth Amendmer armed with which the Pakistani head of state ha dismissed several democratically elected government in the past That neither the President nor the Chie of the Army Staff could dare dislodge a democraticall elected government enjoying a two-thirds majority i the National Assembly and suspend or dissolve th parliament is also indicative of the importanc democratic functioning has come to acquire in today' world Whatever be their actual motives, neither th Pakistani rulers—and the armed forces in particular– nor their overseas patrons—in the White House an the Pentagon—can today possibly trample underfee the democratic aspirations of the people on th specious plea of "national security" (which pretex has anyway suffered a severe blow thanks to th Gujral doctrine) This is of profound significanc from the standpoint of Indian democracy and tha is precisely why one should not hesitate to conve our warmest greetings and congratulations to th Pakistani people as a whole at this welcome turn c events in their country

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34 **Chronology of Events (November 23-29, 1997)**

The latest developments in Pakistan are of specia value for all those in this country who wer legitimately concerned over the fate of their Pakistar brothers and sisters apprehending the possibilit that they would once again come under suffocatin authoritarianism and dictatorship which any Martia Law regime imposes in its wake Any such eventualit

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would have launched a direct assault on Indian democracy as well at a time when it is under severe strain due to a variety of factors including the current stalemate at the Centre that could once again force yet another highly expensive general election on the country

Although one should not be oblivious of the ulterior designs of the anti-democratic forces in Pakistan that are intimately linked to the vested interests as in this country, and even if details of the news from our neighbouring state have yet to reach us and be analysed, from whatever one has been able to gather it is most commendable that the people's verdict there has not been allowed to be overturned by executive fiat This doubtless holds a lesson for us in India too especially when we are in all probability preparing to seek a fresh verdict from the people in the next few months for running the country and managing our affairs

Pakistan has reinforced the edifice of democracy in South Asia For that it deserves our unreserved acclaim

December 3 S C

Coalition Politics and Impending Poll

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

The dragging-on of the Presidential talks with leaders of different political parties has no doubt exasperated the patience of the average citizen as much as the President himself What has been found s that no political formation worth the name has been able to muster sufficient support to ensure a majority in the Lok Sabha

What we have to thank our stars about is the fact that the entire game of elections is played within the four corners of the Constitution which was written as far back as 1950-51 That means the golden jubilee year of the Indian independence synchronised with he deadlock, not before In other words, our Constitution has held good and needs no drastic revision even after five decades of wear and tear Compare this with the situation in Pakistan, which secured its liberation about the same time as ours, and its Constitution did not last a decade, so fragile was it with the forces which were alient to the democratic way of life Here lies the strength of the ndian situation, and here too lies its danger — as t would not last very long

◆

THE disillusion that has set into the masses in the last two years is phenomenal For one thing, they were not used to a perpetual state of coalition politics There is a lurking interest today to return to one-party rule For that purpose, there is a eluctance on the part of the Congress leadership to repudiate one-party rule, and that is why one notices that the Congress leaders still hold out hopes of a resumption of the Congress rule after the general elections This is nothing but fond hopes—for the single reason that as things have unfolded in the Indian political scene today, there is not the ghost of a chance to go in for a one-party rule Coalition politics has just become inescapable

One variant of coalition politics was experimented by V P Singh in 1989 when he could depend on majority support provided to his minority Ministry by the Left on one side and the BJP on the other Ultimately it was the BJP which repudiated that arrangement and withdrew support from the VP

The Next Issue
of
Mainstream
(December 20, 1997)
will be
ANNUAL 1997
marking the completion of thirty five years of its modest existence and containing a rich fare of articles from noted personalities on different facets of the national and international scene.

Singh Ministry, which enabled the Congress under Rajiv Gandhi to defeat him and instal his subservient Chandra Shekhar as the new Prime Minister in place of V.P. Singh After some time, it was Rajiv who had thrown out the Chandra Shekhar Ministry and had to go in for a mid-term general election

The other variant was provided by the present government which had an actual United Front, buttressed up by the Congress to ensure a majority in the Lok Sabha Had this support system been withdrawn, the United Front could not last as could be seen at the onset of the recent crisis Even in the selection of the United Front Prime Minister, the Congress President had a hand as could be seen in the replacement of H D Deve Gowda by Inder Kumar Gujral Although the Congress was not organically connected with the new United Front Government, the fact that it was only with its support, it could be run whether under Deve Gowda or under Gujral, can hardly be ignored

This could be seen in the fact that every turmoil within the Congress party could be felt in the United Front Recently, after the experience of UP in which the BJP could wrench power and get installed in the State, there has been hope that a similar act would be repeated at the Centre with the result that the BJP would be the ruler at the Centre Such a possibility was spelt out by Kalyan Singh and later on, though indirectly, by A B Vajpayee, which would have been disastrous on the whole, as it would have shaken the very roots of the Indian political scene, for which the country was not prepaed

Even if the BJP had managed to secure a majority in the Lok Sabha by means of the strong-arm methods used in UP, it is doubtful whether that government would have lasted for long, as the BJP could display no sign of the realisation for the need of a coalition which was necessary in the present as it prevails today

The Congress had raised the objection of the DMK Ministers staying on at the Centre after the Jain report had been released When it found that it could not break the United Front on that score, it raised the pathetic issue that since the Congress itself had supported the United Front so long, should not the United Front support a Congress-led Ministry at the Centre? This did not cut any ice as it betrayed the utter bankruptcy of the Congress party leadership The programmatic issue was involved and although the BJP was kept out of power, it did not automatically lead to secularism A number of United Front constituents would have had to revolt and join the BJP coalition to enable it to get the majority in the Lok Sabha Such a revolt on the part of any section of the Congress leadership was not possible without the cracking up of the party itself The Congress leaders have so far kept away from such an eventuality This does not mean that within the Congress there are no elements which are not inclined towards the BJP The fact of the matter is that they themselves would not like to take the initiative for such a repudiation of the Congress stand against the BJP

◆

THE other attempts at gaining a majority in the Lok Sabha have been as futile, because it was not expected of the Congress to get a chunk of the BJP It hoped to get a slice of the United Front which it has not yet totally given up The time has been running short for the President, and hence a ramshackle coalition would not be presented to him to comply the gap that he should call the party with the claim on the majority in the Lok Sabha Should he call the party with the largest number in the Lok Sabha with the expectation that it should manage to club togethe a majority in the Lok Sabha within a specific time-frame? This was what Shankar Dayal Sharma did when he was the President when the BJP had jus come out of the election It does not necessarily follo that President Naryanan would imitate the procedur set by his predecessor Even if he did, it does no follow that such a coalition would last

The fact of the matter is that those who would g over, would be virtually guilty of defection, even i it were called by another name And no defectio would last long so that the defector is tested by th vote of the majority in a general election In th murky atmosphere created by corruption an discredit, a member of the Lok Sabha would hardl hold on his own This is the enabling of the India Constitution which can barely be required by long winded interpretation For this, the reference to th election would be necessary That means the prospec of the Lok Sabha being dissolved and a fresh electio taking place so that the identification of each an every MP could be ensured This, of course, is a costl business, but the Indian Constitution could provid no other solution to the thorny question when a elected MP chose to shift his allegiance from on party to another

On a Rainbow in the Sky

ARUN GHOSH

In the social and political turmoil that afflicts India as of writing (in late November 1997), there are omens from which one must take heart Not only are there an increasing number of pockets all over India resisting the pervading ethical decline that now grips the country, there is proof positive that even in the existing framework of administration, there is yet hope One need not despair

One singular ray of hope—a sort of rainbow in the sky when dark clouds hover allround—stems from the little publicised judgement, delivered on June 27, 1997, by the Additional Sessions Judge of Durg (Madhya Pradesh), in the murder trial of the late Shankar Guha Niyogi

◆

SHANKAR GUHA NIYOGI single-handedly built up a trade union movement among the exploited tribal workers in Bhilai, Durg and the neighbouring mining and newly growing industrial areas His task was not easy To begin with, he was an outsider, and he sought to remedy that by living with the tribals, living like them, eating and dressing like them, marrying into a poor tribal family to identify with them And yet, he was a trade unionist *par excellence* He understood the ethos and the nature of an industrialised economy, and he was determined to ensure that in the 'socialistic' republic of the Indian Union, with rapid industrialisation occurring in the wake of a planned progamme—with formally announced statutory Minimum Wages, etc —the tribal workers should not be denied their rightful dues He was helpless insofar as the alienation of the tribals from their own 'land' was concerned, that had already occurred before he emerged on the scene His endeavour was to ensure some degree of fairness (at least in terms of minimum wages) by organising labour into cohesive trade unions

He, therefore, set about organsing, first, the Chattisgarh Mukti Morcha (CMM hereafter), and then organising the workers of the Bhilai-Durg area This was *not* an easy task, and required both foresight and organising capability as well as transparent honesty To achieve his objective, Shankar Guha Niyogi identified and incorporated the interests of both the industrial and mining workers of the area and also of the farm population Considering the state of the Indian economy, and the constant emergence of surplus workers without any regular means of livelihood, his task required instilling a sense of solidarity among different types of workers That is something unique in the annals of trade unionism Shankar Guha Niyogi was clearly successful, for he began to be seen as posing a threat to the newly growing industrial class which had no intention of paying labour its due

The author, a noted economist, is a former Member of the Planning Commission

But this brief essay is *not* on Shankar Guha Niyogi and his achievements As may easily be imagined, Shankar Guha Niyogi very naturally fell foul of the newly emerging vested interests, who saw in him an inveterate enemy of the (exploitative) capitalist

Shankar Guha Niyogi realised two ground realities The Bhilai Steel Plant was obviously paying handsome wages (in comparison with wages and incomes beyond the shadow of the steel plant) The problem was with the 'contractors' of the Bhilai Steel Plant But, they were too many, they were dispersed, their workers were a fast changing multitude Before tackling them, it was necessary, first, to tackle the relatively more *organised industrial units* in the area which were conspicuous in their exploitation of the labour employed by them He, therefore, targeted these industrial units, and commenced his trade union activities centering around the workers in these industries and the multitude of mine workers in the area The Simplex Industries happened to be one such unit Shankar Guha Niyogi was convinced that once he was able to get these 'organised' (medium scale) industrial units to recognise their trade unions, he would be able to gradually extend the scope of trade union activity—and enforce the statutory Minimum Wages—even to the unorganised mine workers and smaller industrial units

The tiger in the forest does not like his killing grounds to be disturbed Shankar Guha Niyogi was perceived as an obvious interloper, an unwelcome threat to the unrestrained (and exploitative) profiteering by the affected industrial magnates

◆

WHEN lures of hush money proved to be ineffective—for the Shankar Guha Niyogis of this world cannot be bought—the industrial magnates took (so the courts have found) to other means Every developing country develops its 'goons', and the goons of every society thrive on the patronage of the avaricious and unprincipled rich who are prepared to go to any length to achieve their own limited ends Shankar Guha Niyogi had been forewarned, indeed, the killers (and their instigators) tried to get him to deviate through appropriate threats, directly conveyed Theirs was not a blood feud, it was not 'revenge', it was no more than the sordid motive of removing every obstacle from their objective of making money, no matter what the human cost of the process was It was "raw capitalism" of the eighteenth and nineteenth century England, it was the philosophy of the "carpetbaggers" in the USA when the wild West was won

More than six years back, on the night of September 28/29 of 1991, Shankar Guha Niyogi was shot by a hired killer in his small house—his residence-cum-office—while another hired killer stood guard outside the house The noise woke his attendant, who found Shankar Guha Niyogi writhing in bed, with blood splattered on his bed He was immediately brought to the nearest hospital, but by that time he was dead (through excessive bleeding and shock as was diagnosed in the postmortem examination) That it was a clear case of cold-blooded murder was clear, but the assailants had made a quick getaway, and had disappeared in the dark of the night While the identity of the assailants was not known, it was also obvious that it was a case of preplanned murder, for which the motivation could not be personal or related to property or similar disputes, the needle of suspicion pointed to those who had threatened Shankar Guha Niyogi (The latter had recorded these threats in his diary and had also kept a tape-recorded message for his followers Perhaps he had foreseen his murder, as the tape recording clearly indicates)

It redounds to the great credit of the CBI—who were asked to investigate into the murder and to trace the culprits—that they succeeded in not only piecing together the meagre clues then available, they succeeded thereafter in nabbing the two hired assassins directly involved in the murder, and also on the basis of their confessions and by tracing the ownership of the arms and vehicles involved [including the vehicle which carried the 'instigators' (the rich industrial magnates) and the actual assassins, to Nepal, where the conspiracy to murder Guha Niyogi was hatched]

A search of the houses of the industrial magnates yielded the required evidence of the conspiracy, as also a large quantity of unlicensed arms and ammunition, hotel bills in Nepal, and letters which were clearly incriminating The CBI also found concrete evidence of large sums handed out by the concerned industrialists being deposited in new bank accounts opened by the assassins after the murder

The details pertaining to this process, as well as other legal/quasi-legal evidence and arguments are of no interest to the readers of this journal But two issues underlying the case, and the historic judgement delivered by the Additional Sessions Judge of Durg (on June 23, 1997) are certainly of great socio-political significance To recall the judgement, two prominent industrialists of the Simplex Group of Industries have been sentenced to imprisonment for life, plus a hefty fine, the death sentence was passed for the assassin who fired the bullets (which killed Shankar Guha Niyogi), and life sentence for the two accomplices who actively aided and abetted in the murder (including provision of transport for the getaway, shelter to the actual assassin while he was on the run, and for acting as go-between in collecting payment of blood money)

◆

How is this story of relevance today? There are three very clear messages that shine through Even though the case is not closed—there is an appeal pending in the High Court of Madhya Pradesh—the manner in which the CBI pursued the case as well as the wording of the judgement of the Additional Sessions Judge of Durg give one an immense sense of *hope* In the murky political atmosphere of today (as of late November 1997), the fact that the long arm of the law in India can reach out to nab the 'criminals' who masquerade as industrialists is certainly a hopeful sign

The above prognosis is based on the 184-page judgement, delivered in Hindi, which has been translated into English and published by the Chattisgarh Institute of Law The English translation *cannot* purport to be the actual text of the judgement, since the translation is not an official one

The other heartening development is that even after Shankar Guha Niyogi's untimely and unfortunate death, the workers of the industrial belt in and around Bhilai remain united, and the CMM continues to be a force This, despite all the changes in the industrial scene wrought by the Government of India in the name of economic 'liberalisation' This is most heartwarming, especially to those whose sights are confined to happenings in New Delhi, Bombay and to the forces in the outside world There is yet reason for hope

So, even though dark clouds pervade over the Indian skies, there is yet a lovely rainbow filtering through the clouds, and, we can take heart that the dark clouds may yet scatter away That will certainly happen if the likes of the CMM proliferate, if they are able to weld the peasants and workers into a united force ■

The Death of Subhas Chandra Bose

LEONARD A GORDON

The author, a Professor of History at the City University of New York, is the author of the book, Brothers against the Raj A Biography of Indian Nationalists Sarat and Subhas Chandra Bose *(published by Columbia University Press, New York and London, 1990) An abridged version of this article was printed in* The Times Higher Education Supplement, *London on September 12, 1997 It is being reproduced with due acknowledgement and with the author's consent*

For decades after his disappearance on August 18, 1945, Subhas Chandra Bose, a famous Indian patriot and enemy of the British Raj, was thought by many Indians to be alive His imminent appearance was often announced, or a picture of a mysterious holy man would appear in a paper and be identified as Bose When I lived in Calcutta in the 1960s and had started my research about him, people would come and say "he is to speak tomorrow at the market in (some nearby town)" I would go and the appearance had always been put off A fly-by-night Bengali paper with a photograph of a sadhu resembling Bose at Nehru's funeral in 1964 was pasted on every lamp post in Calcutta In 1979 a photograph was given to the press purporting to be Bose and since it was given out by a member of the Indian parliament, it appeared on the front page of every Indian newspaper Why did Bengalis and some other Indians want him alive?

West Bengal, the section of undivided Bengal left to the Republic of India by the partition of 1947, was in decline Millions of refugees had arrived from Eastern Bengal, the agriculturally richer part of Bengal, and sat down mainly in the Calcutta area The Hooghly River, a part of the Ganges, was silting up, and the port of Calcutta, once a great overseas trading base, was dying Some thought West Bengal needed a great man to save it and her last and favourite hero had disappeared, some said died, in mysterious circumstances the week World War II ended Those who insisted that a great leader would help to save Bengal came to believe that perhaps he was alive, just waiting for the right moment to return and take charge He might even seize command of all of India and bring her to modernity and prosperity

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WHEN Bose disappeared, the war was ending and all was chaotic in East Asia So there was no body, no photographs, no official report by the Governments of India or Britain These governments did nothing to prevent the confusion Even members of India's Interim Government in 1946 waffled on the matter Bose had disappeared several times earlier in his life, so again rumours began in 1945 and a powerful myth grew

To the British, Subhas Bose was a particularly unpalatable character, all thought of whom they hoped to purge themselves He was a dynamic and troublesome younger leader of the Indian National Congress under Mahatma Gandhi who was for some years the head of the Bengal Provincial Congress Committee, and was twice chosen President of the National Congress organisation in 1938, and then again in 1939 against Gandhi's wishes Bose was a popular mass leader who had ties to underground revolutionaries Because of these connections, he was jailed repeatedly and exiled to Europe in the 1930s He made it clear that if Gandhi's methods did not work, well, there were other possibilities for a subject people He had inside knowledge of individual assassination attempts on officials, but what he really wanted—if Gandhi, indeed, failed—was an army of Indians to drive the British from India

The Second World War gave him his opportunity Imprisoned in 1940, he went on a fast and was finally released Then in January 1941, he escaped from under the watchful eyes of the police in Calcutta and went in disguise to the northwest of India, crossing the frontier into Afghanistan on foot Reaching Kabul, he contacted the Italian, German, and Soviet Governments The Germans agreed to accept him and he was given an Italian passport As Orlando Mazzotta, he travelled through the Soviet Union to Berlin in the spring of 1941

In Berlin he organised the Free India Centre and the Indian Legion, a small military force composed mostly of Indian prisoners of war captured in North Africa For the Centre, a propaganda enterprise, broadcasting back to India and turning out anti-British materials, he recruited Indians marooned in

Europe by the war's outbreak He hoped for tripartite recognition of a provisional government of free India Hitler would not give this or substantial help

Bose was finally allowed to leave in 1943 for South-East Asia where he reorganised the Indian National Army and set up the Provisional Government of Free India, supported by a civilian organisation, the Indian Independence League The INA participated in the Japanese invasion of India in 1944 and the battles of Imphal and Kohima This invasion was a disaster for the attackers and as he fled back through Burma and Thailand, Bose decided to make his way to Manchuria, hoping to contact the Soviet Government He believed the Soviets might prove to be the next enemies of the British Empire

I am persuaded that all the available evidence shows that he travelled by plane to Vietnam and then to Taiwan The overloaded plane, with a top Japanese General, and other Japanese officers plus Bose and one assistant, crashed as it attempted to take off from Taipeh airport Bose was badly burnt, taken to a local military hospital, treated for terrible burns, and died that evening His body was cremated and the ashes taken to Tokyo, and eventually deposited in a Buddhist temple, where they sit today But the lack of body, of photographs, of a death certificate, of official and public reports, led to controversy almost immediately

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Several recent developments may help to put out the flame of argument The British Government—as several writers have recently explained—has opened up long-sealed files from a semi-secret branch of the Government of India called IPI, Indian Political Intelligence These files, somewhat censored, have been released in the India Office Library and one of these files upon Bose's death In this file, L/P & J/12/217, there are some papers about the last hours of Bose including an interview conducted in Hong Kong in 1946 with the doctor who treated Bose in the Taiwan military hospital

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However, for reasons known only to a person or persons in the British Foreign Office, several papers following the doctor's statement have been removed While these papers are kept secret, the controversy will not be put to rest Rumours of British assassination plots and all manner of skullduggery will persist

Since I have been tracking this matter for some 20 years, I must explain there is one particular document which I learned of years ago, and which Bose's family, officials of the Government of free India, and I have been searching for these last decades This was a report on Bose's death written by Colonel, later Sir John Figgess of British military intelligence in Tokyo prepared some time after the crash When I could not obtain the document itself, I quoted a letter that Sir John, by then employed by Christie's, wrote to me for my book, *Brothers against the Raj A Biography of Indian Nationalists Sarat and Subhas Chandra Bose*, published in 1990

Was the Figgess report, the document, removed from the IPI file? Were there other documents? I do not know But I do know that by some strange coincidence a xerox copy of the Figgess report was given by a donor to the India Office Library, and this person did not want to be named It was placed in the European manuscripts collection Since this file, Eur MSS c 785, is open and any scholar or writer can now read it, I will quote from it below It should also be noted that Sir John Figgess died in March o this year and though he wrote to me that he did no have a copy of this report, he has to be one candidate for the anonymous donor

In this concise report, dated July 25, 1946, Lt -Col Figgess says that in response to a request from Supreme Allied Command, Southeast Asia, that " a very through investigation has been conducted in Tokyo to establish the precise details of the circumstances surrounding the reported death o Subhas Chandra Bose" The heart of the report is thi paragraph

> As a result of a series of interrogations of individual named in the following paragraphs it is confirmed a certain that S C Bose died in a TAIHOKU Militar Hospital (NAMMON Ward) some time between 170 hours and 2000 hours local time on the 18 August, 194 The cause of death was heart failure resulting fror multiple burns and shock All the persons named belov were interrogated at different times but the severa accounts of the event agree both in substance and deta at all points where the knowledge of the subjects coul have been deemed to be based on common experienc

> The possibility of a pre-arranged fabrication must be excluded since most of the individuals concerned had no opportunity of contact with one another prior to interrogation

The rest of the four pages contains details of the interrogations of Japanese military officers who survived the crash (Lt -Cols Nongaki and Sakai) and those who treated Bose or saw him in the hospital or dealt with the problem of what to do with the body

Many of the same interviews with these and several other Japanese officers have been conducted at least three times over the years since Colonel Figgess applied himself to the task Two parliamentary commissions were set up in India, in 1956 and 1970, and investigated, and I did the same in 1979 The Khosla Commission Report of 1970 is notable for the incisive way it deals with the myths of Bose's activities after his death as presented by a variety of witnesses and documents

So we have yet further corroboration of the plane crash, Bose's death in a military hospital, subsequent cremation and removal of the ashes to a Tokyo temple This should help to end the alternative versions However, the British Foreign Office should enter the fray It should return the removed documents to L/P & J/12/217, it should officially release the report of Colonel Figgess, and it should give some explanation of why it has taken so long for these documents to be allowed public scrutiny Or does the British Government have something to hide? ■

'Look, My Lord, It Comes'

THE APPARITION OF THE DEAD KING APPEARS AGAIN IN THE FORM OF A REPORT

N.A. KARIM

This write-up by the former Pro-Vice-Chancellor, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram was written before the latest turn to the crisis at the Centre —Editor

> **Marcellus** *Peace, break thee off; look where it comes again*
> **Bernardo.** *In the same figure, like the King that's dead*
> —**Hamlet,** *Prince of Denmark, Act I, Sc i*

The United Front Government at the Centre, like the two officers on guard at the platform of the Castle at Elsinore, Denmark, who were taken aback at the appearance of the apparition of the dead King of Denmark again, is shocked and bewildered by the ghost of assassinated Rajiv Gandhi in the form of the interim report of the Jain Commission submitted in August this year A portion of this 17-volume report was published in a national newsmagazine which whetted the appetite of the long power-hungry Congress politicians No time was lost by them in pouncing upon their political enemies who share power at the Centre and in the States only because they think that their leader was murdered at the prime of a long promising political career under the shadow of which they could have as in the past continued the fruits of power even now

The conclusions of this Commission, if the leaked portions are reliable, do not agree with the political policies, alignments and realities that were in existence in this country since 1980 and the apportioning of the blame for the tragedy in 1991 among various political parties and individual leaders Appointed on August 23, 1991 the single-man Jain Commission to look into any possible conspiracy angle to the murder of Rajiv Gandhi took seven long years to produce the interim report The main accusing finger, it seems, is aimed at the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) which is alleged to be responsible for the growth of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)-inspired militancy in Tamil Nadu and which was at the root of the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi The fluctuations in the history of India's attitude towards the LTTE is to be closely studied before the blame is put at any one door for the infiltration of its terrorist spirit in the State

It was Rajiv Gandhi with his close confidant, M G Ramachandran of the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), who was the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu till his death, who shaped a pro-LTTE Sri Lankan policy first The impact of this original policy does not seem to have been taken into account except the depositions of individuals the statements of some of whom the Commission did not believe fully True, Rajiv Gandhi changed his policy and became hostile to the LTTE and took upon himself the responsibility of fighting a futile and thankless war against them on behalf of the then Sri Lankan Government by sending an Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) there Not only was the national pride of the Sri Lankans hurt by his thoughtless policies but he also incurred the wrath of the LTTE The attempt of assault at a ceremonial parade which Rajiv Gandhi was inspecting in Sri Lanka from which he narrowly escaped then was an unmistakable pointer that how deep was the resentment of the people there against India's direct interference in their affairs The IPKF was doing the dirty work which the then ruling establishment of Sri Lanka should have done And many Indian lives were lost in the military operations of the euphemistically called Indian Peace Keeping Force The operations of the Indian Army angered the LTTE and it was this iron that entered their soul that led to the hatching of the conspiracy and assassination of Rajiv Gandhi The LTTE had from the days of the Chief Minister, M G Ramachandran, if not earlier, a strong foothold in Tamil Nadu The racial affinity that a vast section of the people of Tamil Nadu has with Sri Lankan Tamils irrespective of their political affiliations influenced the Rajiv-MGR-crafted Sri Lankan policy which later ended in a fiasco

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IT is true that the then Prime Minister, Chandra Shekhar, had dismissed the DMK Government of Karunanidhi for allegedly helping the presence and activities of the LTTE in the State That was later, and was evidently done at the instance of Rajiv Gandhi on whose support the short-lived government of Chandra Shekhar existed When viewed from the total perspective of India's policy towards the LTTE perhaps it is unfair to blame Karunanidhi and his DMK alone for the LTTE's militant presence in Tamil Nadu The conspiracy aspect, if any, is of course not the evolution of an environment, though helpful, in hatching a plot for the murder There might have been security lapses during the fateful visit of the former Prime Minister to Tamil Nadu and the tragic scene at Sri Perumbudur The State was then under President's Rule

The Congress on whose support the UF Government at the Centre so far existed has its own political compulsions in making its ranks close at this time as a threat of revolt against Kesri has become almost endemic in the party And the Rajiv assassination issue is perhaps the most potent one that can mobilise the support of all in spite of the fact that the findings of the interim report is not fully known In the first round the Congress party had been successful in getting a firm commitment from the Gujral Government to table the report in Parliament on the first day of the winter season itself which began on November 19, 1997 alongwith the Action Taken Report (ATR) What action the Congress contemplates in this regard is not clear except forcing the UF to jettison the DMK from the Central Government about which senior leaders of the Congress have already made their minds known

The Convenor of the United Front, Chandrababu Naidu, first and then Prime Minister Gujral made it clear that this unreasonable demand of the Congress cannot be met The Congress Parliamentary Party meeting on the eve of the Parliament session made the dropping of the DMK from the government a prestige issue and insisted on its implementation, thus was a new crisis engedered For those wanting a shake-up in the Congress and a fresh look at the question of support to the UF in the context of the BJP's ill-concealed ambition to capture power at the Centre *a la Lucknow mode* this stand-off between the UF and the Congress on the issue of the Jain Commission report came at an opportune moment

But the Congress by seizing the interim report of Jain Commission to settle scores with the DMK is indeed playing with fire It might set the whole house on blaze if the handling is not careful and clever There is a criminal case in a Madras court regarding the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi at Sri Perumbudur The verdict of the court might upset the political plans the Congress is making for a comeback to power at the Centre by forcing the UF to accommodate them in the government by vacating the DMK as this will give them a moral boost and a new political client Action according to the script prepared by Kesri and his advisors has till date not happened

The Congress gained considerable political advantage in the second phase of the Lok Sabha elections a few days before which Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated That was a sympathy wave which helped the Congress in 1991 What they expect this time is an 'anger wave' against the alleged killers It all depends on the reappearance of the apparition as in Shakespeare's play, *Hamlet,* and in speaking the truth of the foul killing to the Prince of Denmark ■

My Latest Impressions

KULDIP NAYAR

A book in Urdu, *Will Pakistan Break Up?*, has an interesting passage which suggests that Islamabad had a hand in the 1993 bomb blasts in Mumbai The author, Munir Ahmed, a journalist, quotes Pakistan's former President Ishaq Khan as having said that one top officer was indulging in such dangerous activities as were harmful and disconcerting for Pakistan "I had to tell the Prime Minister that the particular officer wanted to push us into a war with our neighbouring country," said Ishaq Khan

The pertinent passage reads thus

> The former President said that on March 23 the situation became so serious that Foreign Secretary Shariyar came to him in a disturbed state of mind and said that the relationship with India following the bomb blasts had deteriorated so much that it had threatened to go to war "I told the Prime Minister to get in touch with New Delhi to stop further deteroiraton in our relations He said he (the Prime Minister) would do it But he only talked to the Pakistan High Commissioner in New Delhi "

Once in a while a book comes out in Paksitan to tell something startling but frank For example, Altaf Gauhar's book on Ayub Khan, Pakistan's Martial Law Administrator, gives a blow-by-blow account of Islamabad's involvement in starting the 1965 war A day before 'Operation Gibraltar', the code used for the 1965 infiltration, was approved by Bhutto, who had been reappointed as the Foreign Minister He wrote a letter to Ayub in which he advised him that India was "at present in no position to risk a general war of unlimited duration for the annihilation of Pakistan" According to him, "Pakistan enjoyed relative superiority in terms of quality and equipment"

Ayub, although a reluctant participant to what Bhutto did, said.

> to expect quick results in this struggle, when India has much larger forces than us, would be unrealistic Therefore, our action should be such that can be sustained over-a long period As a general rule Hindu morale would not stand more than a couple of hard blows at the right time and place Such opportunities should, therefore, be sought and exploited

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FUNDAMENTALISTS in Pakistan do not forget and forgive They have killed Lahore High Court judge Bhatti for having released two years ago a Christian boy, who was wrongly indicted for having cast aspersions on Islam The boy is living safely in Germany, where he had sought refuge The judge has, however, paid the price for giving the verdict which the fundamentalists did not like

People in Lahore recall the judge's assassination with regret The incident and some other instances of browbeating has made the liberals afraid of fundamentalists There is fear in the air, although people generally feel that the type of Islam the fundamentalists represent has hamstrung their way of living But they are too timid to speak out

When it comes to relations with India, the fundamentalists are intractable Even a tinge of indication of thaw between the two countries is damned as a surrender to Hindus That is the reason why the relationship is stuck where it was 50 years ago That also explains the absence of Pakistanis on the Wagah border on the August 14-15 night from the celebrations of the fiftieth years of the subcontinent's independence

While in Lahore, I complained to many who had promised to come to the border but did not They said that the Jamiat-e-Islami threatened to kill anybody who would go to the border Threats were followed by telephone calls to prominent persons and leaders of several organisations The propaganda unleashed was that the celebrations were an attempt to undo the partition Still more than 10,000 people would have reached the Wagah border But then the Punjab Government at Lahore stepped in and issued an order under Section 144 to ban the assembly of more than five people and also sealed the roads leading to the border

The fundamentalists seem to have frightened Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif as well He has issued an order that women appearing on television should cover their head and that boys and girls should not sit side by side in public There is also an unofficial word that records of Indian songs should not be played in public However, a recent study done in Pakistan indicates that shops from Karachi to Peshawar stocked 92 per cent of records and video cassettes from India

The government, more so the establishment, puts all the time spokes in the path of relations with India

However, it is amazing to find the warmth a Pakistani has towards an Indian He goes out of the way to shower his affection and hospitality One hears them talking about their friends living across the border and wishing further relaxation in the visa system There were complaints from some that their applications for visas were rejected without any rhyme or reason But the delay was mentioned by many

Surprisingly, when it comes to political hold, the fundamentalists have very little to show It seems that the Pakistanis do not vote in the name of Islam In fact, candidates with such a plank are roundly defeated The Pakistan National Assembly does not have even five members representing the fundamentalists Pakistanis do have a swipe at us by pointing out that the BJP appealing in the name of *Hindutva* has 30 per cent of seats in the Lok Sabha

The old Dingha Singh building at the Mall in Lahore is due to be demolished After partition scores of people occupied the building and became owners over the years Their demands for ownership were so many that the court could not reconcile them It ordered that the building be auctioned and the money collected from it be distributed among the claimants

News Release

Announcing a One-Act Play Competition on the Themes of Violence and Non-Violence

The Centre for Non-Violence Through the Arts at the Darpana Academy of Performing Arts, Ahmedabad has the pleasure in announcing a one-act play competition

Entries must be in Hindi, Gujarati or English and must be original writing The theme of the play must explore the ideas of non violence in any of their manifestations, shedding new light or highlighting new ideas on the subject The aim of the competition is to get work which will aid in our understanding of the idea of violence to better equip ourselves to deal with the violence inherent in all of us

The winner will be awarded a cash prize of Rs 10,000 and the runner up a cash prize of Rs 5000 In addition, both plays will be produced by the Academy and presented at the new Festival of Non-Violence in February All entries must be sent typed to

The Centre for Non-Violence Through the Arts,
Darpana Academy of Performing Arts,
Usmanpura,
Ahmedabad - 380 013

Last date December 31, 1997

While talking of migrants, the Muhajir Qwami Movement (MQM) is quiet When I was in Karachi sometime in 1996, they almost dictated terms The city was tense and there was flight of capital This has almost changed Now there is no fear even when you walk through the MQM-congested areas There is normalcy However, hundreds of MQM leaders and followers have been physically eliminated In some cases, it has been cold-blood murder But then the argument is "How do you deal with violent movements?" It is the same question which is posed in India at disturbed places I still believe that the law protectors cannot take the law into their own hands. There is something called human rights and those rights should be protected

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IT is an interesting interview by Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah that a Pakistani newspape has published It is from the days when the divisio of the subcontinent was two months old This i significant in the present context when the tw countries are trying to develop good relations Jinna said he would not accept the proposal of forming Union of the two sovereign countries of Pakistan an India under a common Centre Dilating upon th two-nation theory, he said the theory was not onl an ideal but a concrete reality He said India ha been divided on the basis of this historical trut Horrible incidents that occurred during the last tw months and the scheme of evacuating Hindus fro Pakistan by the Indian Union had established th truth of the two-nation theory

Jinnah characterised the communal riots as deep-rooted conspiracy, the main purpose of whic was to shake the foundation of the new state Pakistan The remedy to this agonising situatio Jinnah asserted, was that India should crush t demon of communal riots with an iron hand an break the web of conspiracies woven in this regar He regretted the mischievous propaganda that t Muslim League had betrayed the Muslim minority India where it would continue to suffer in the futu and that Pakistan would not be able to take care them.

SINO-JAPANESE TIES

Past Legacy versus Future Vision

SWARAN SINGH

This year has seen a flurry of activity for Sino-Japanese ties The year opened with the news about revision of the Japan-US security arrangements in December last year covering the Taiwan Straits which generated controversies that still continue to prick both sides and this issue clearly dominated their agenda when the Prime Ministers of Japan and China took the bold initiative to exchange visits to each other's country in September and November respectively This rapprochement, however, was partly facilitated by two other coincidents of their history (a) this year marked the twentyfifth anniversary of the Sino-Japanese Joint Statement of 1972, and (b) next year completes 20 years since the two sides signed the historic Sino-Japanese Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1978

In fact, many scholars had already hastened to conclude that this year witnessed Sino-Japanese ties reaching their nadir ever since their awkward honeymoon began in the late 1970s Even now despite these two visits the two remain virtually at loggerheads and the issue of Japanese-US security arrangement has not been fully resolved to the satisfaction of each side But in the given context of the historical legacy of their hostilities as also the current ground realities where both nations are trying to emerge as global political actors, this new trend of frequent high-level visits can itself be described as a major turning-point in their downward slide First, Prime Minister Hashimoto was in Beijing in September trying his best to break the ice This was then followed by China's Premier Li Peng recently paying a six-day official goodwill visit to Japan which succeeded in concluding at least four major treaties the process for which had been greatly hastened during Hashimoto's visit to Beijing This was Li Peng's second visit to Japan and during November 11-16, 1997, apart from his three-day visit to Tokyo, he also visited other major Japanese cities which included Hakone, Nagoya, Osaka and Nara

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IN this backdrop, therefore, the major achievements of these two recent Prime Ministerial meetings put together can be counted as follows But before counting those achievements one fact must also be put in perspective without doubt, this change of heart has, at least partly, followed from President Jiang Zemin's successful summit in Washington in October last In fact, some portions of the recent Li Peng-Hashimoto Joint Statement read very much like the one that Jiang Zemin had signed with Bill Clinton in Washington Following the footsteps of their closest ally, the United States, for example, Japan agreed in the Joint Statement of November 12, 1997 that China's accession to the World Trade Organisation will benefit not only China and Japan but also all the WTO members Similarly, Japan too has decided to lift the ban on the export of nuclear power equipment to China and allow Japanese enterprises to export items like cooling and piping devices to China Thirdly, they also signed a twentyfirst century-oriented environmental protection cooperation agreement and the two are expected to share technologies, information and experience in dealing with these problems

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But in their overall rapprochement this does not as yet mean very much These ties still continue to be guided by the way the two sides perceive their historical facts and geographical realities And here, the following three problems can be safely described as the basis for moulding their policy formulations towards each other First and foremost, China (especially the Chinese people), continue to remain still very sensitive to Japan's role during World War II This has been one of the most critical issues continuing to block any progress in their rapprochement And to that effect, a major goodwill gesture was made by Prime Minister Hashimoto during his last visit in September While in China, Prime Minister Hashimoto took time off to especially visit Shenyang's Japanese Aggression Memorial Hall where he expressed "deep remorse and regret" over Japan's aggression against China during World War II Also, Hashimoto has repeatedly told the Chinese leaders that the revised guidelines for Japanese-US Defence Cooperation do not violate the provisions of the Japanese Constitution, are defensive, and do not run counter to the basic principles of the Japanese-Chinese Joint Statement and the Japanese-Chinese

Treaty of Peace and Friendship, which basically means "one China principle" But in the near future at least, this problem of perceptions being too difficult is unlikely to disappear

Secondly, closely connected to these historical legacies is their dispute over the Senkaku (Diaoyu in Chinese) Island which again continues to be another persistent irritant in Sino-Japanese ties This issue had also acquired prominence following incursions by Japanese Rightist groups to this Island which had led to strong protests from the Chinese side Here again, the Japanese have lately made some goodwill gestures The Japanese side, for example, has dismantled all beacons, investigated and searched relevant organisations, and taken measures to resolve the problem During Li Peng's visit to Japan, the two sides signed a "Sino-Japanese Fishery Agreement" which now provides some sort of legal basis for maintaining peace and stability in waters around this Island This basically has effected two changes in their current position First, keeping in line with the International Law of the Seas, which came into effect on July 20 this year, the agreement has changed their original flag country principle into a littoral country principle This means that the fishermen of one country who enter the waters of the other side to fish will not be dealt with according to their national flag, but will be handed over to the country which they enter to be dealt with Secondly, because the new International Law of the Seas expands the exclusive economic zone of a country to 200 nautical miles, and the distance between China and Japan is only some 100 nautical miles, and the controversial Senkaku Island is in the middle, the two sides have, therefore, decided to maintain the status quo regarding this Island The Chinese side had, in fact, all along advocated the "shelving disputes and carrying out common development" approach which seems to be enshrined in this Agreement where both have agreed to "abide by the temporarily delimited water areas and maintain the status quo"

Finally, despite all efforts to the contrary, the Taiwan question remains another sore point in Sino-Japanese ties China's main objection is that notwithstanding their repeated protestations, Japan still continues to maintain its ambiguous attitude towards the Taiwan question In fact it was this issue that made their relations reach the nadir when following the Japan-US revised security arrangements in December last year a top official declared last August that it included provisions to deal with any crisis in the Taiwan Straits which China regards as purely its internal matter What makes this a major irritant is that Japanese leaders in their repeated explanations have neither denied the ravings of Kajiyama and other officials who declared that the scope of their revised security arrangements with the United States in December last year (1996) covers dealing with the possibilities of any crisis in the Taiwan Straits, nor provided any explanation as to why the Japanese should consider such a move on an issue which China regards as its internal matter Prime Minister Hashimoto has repeatedly reiterated the standard official line saying that Japan's commitments under the Japan-US security arrangements are directed at a crisis situation rather than any specific country Japanese leaders have also repeatedly promised to "keep transparent" these arrangements and suggested for a tripartite security dialogue between China, Japan and the United States But here again, it appears unlikely that Japan will give up its "Taiwan card" soon

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But during these 25 years of diplomatic ties the two have also built bridges over many of these troubled waters Physically both recognise that they happen to be close neighbours separated only by a narrow strip of water The two also share similar cultures and traditions and especially their economies have come to be strongly interwined due to their expanding bilateral trade which has crossed the $ 60 billion mark for 1996 and is expected to reach $ 65 billion in 1997 Japan has become China's largest trading partner since 1993 and China is Japan's second largest trading partner Japan's investment in China ranks second By June this year, China had approved an accumulated total of 15,670 Japanese-funded projects worth $ 27 6 billion Besides, the accumulated total of the Japanese Government's low-interest loans to China comes to $ 12 billion During Li Peng's recent visit the officials from the two sides also signed and exchanged notes on the creation of a Sino-Japanese development fund project where Japan will grant China a loan amounting to $ 210 million towards promoting their bilateral trade and economic cooperation Similarly, looking at the crisis that can erupt from financial destabilisation which has plagued the South-East Asian countries recently, China has also mooted a proposal for an Asian Currency Fund which is under deliberation

Furthermore, on the wider plane China has also become increasingly interested in strengthening its security ties at both the bilateral and multilateral levels As far as Japan is concerned, to continue their security dialogue further, China's Deputy Chief of the

People's Liberation Army, Xiong Guangkai, is scheduled to visit Tokyo before the end of this month Besides, China's Defence Minister, Chi Haotian, is also expected to visit Japan sometime early next year In fact, at a reception held by the Japan-China friendship organisations, Li Peng put forward five basic principles as a guidepost for the development of Sino-Japanese relations mutual respect and non-interference in each other's internal affairs, seeking common ground while reserving and properly handling differences, increasing dialogue and promoting mutual understanding, developing economic cooperation for mutual benefit, and looking into the future and preserving friendly ties from generation to generation And this is the broad vision which is expected to be the guidepost for the pace and progress of their future rapprochement

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To conclude, the sinews of cooperation between these two largest (in terms of population) and richest (in terms of per capita growth) nations of the world, apart from promoting their bilateral ties, have a great significance for the future of Asia But while Japan fears China's military rise, China also fears Japan's emergence as an economic power turning both into major rivals on the world stage Nevertheless, both sides also recognise the need for evolving a cooperative engagement which has become the buzzword of the post-Cold War inter-state ties And here, with the successful recovery of Hong Kong, the smooth transfer of power after the death of Deng, and its new international image following President Jiang Zemin's productive summit in Washington, China's leaders have gained the requisite confidence to take new initiatives at developing Sino-Japanese ties Also, both the US and Japan have come to recognise China's potential as another superpower-on-the-horizon and are definitely trying hard to evolve new paradigms for working together And as the focus of the next century shifts to Asia, mutual perceptions and equations between nations like China and Japan become increasingly important for the rest of the world

It is in this chain of titanic shifts from the past to the future that the Sino-Japanese rapprochement marks a critical component ■

CRB Scandal : Reserve Bank's Culpability

SUBHASH CHANDRA SARKER

The scam perpetrated by the CRB Capital Markets Company has brought to the fore the Reserve Bsank of India's culpability to make it possible for financial scams to happen (one is tempted to say to facilitate financial scams) Of course, that the Reserve Bank of India, the sole authority to determine the viability of the rupee and banks and all financial institutions in the country, has been particularly favourable to the dubious dealers in the financial world is a well-known fact In 1990 the then Governor of the Reserve Bank of India was full of admiration for the US Citibank, despite the fact that it was the Citibank's thoroughly uncalled for and anti-Indian circular about what the bank supposed to be India's inability to honour the letter of credit in the international market, which triggered the foreign exchange crisis, that made the Government of India take gold physically out of India to be deposited with the Bank of England as a sort of collateral security to avoid a run on India's foreign exchange reserves, which were extremely low at that time When the Reserve Bank's own officers wanted to take punitive measures against the Citibank for violation of banking norms fixed by the Reserve Bank itself, and approached the Governor, Venkitaramanan, for permission, they were snubbed into inaction against the Citibank It may be mentioned that in the USA—Citibank's headquarters—the Chairman and Chief Executive of the Bank was made to attend every morning a meeting with the Federal Reserve Board officers to explain the bank's status on the previous day So shaky was the Citibank's foundation

The irregularities in security transactions of the banks under the so-called 'ready forward' repose method (lending money against non-existent securities on a false promise to repay or surrender the pledged securities—the practice came to be known as "Banker's Receipt"—that is given in lieu of actual securities, which ought to have been given but were not given at the time of the transaction) cost the nation dearly (Rs 13 lakh crores, according to Gurudas Das Gupta, MP, who was himself a member of the

Joint Parliamentary Committee which investigated into the securities scam that broke open in 1992 after one year of "reform" so much tomtomed as the panacea for economic ills of the country against all evidence to the contrary) The irregularities were brought to the notice of the top officers of the Reserve Bank but again no action was taken and the scam amount allowed to grow further

This is not the place to recount the various acts of omission and commission of the Reserve Bank which facilitated the scam Suffice it to say, the Bank had given a licence for a non-banking finance company—Fairgrowth Financial Services Limited (FFSL) floated by B Ratnakar, who was himself already under investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigation on the charge of possessing disproportionate assets not warranted by his known income The FFSL unsurprisingly was found to have used forged documents including its own balancesheet for the year ending March 31, 1992 and was a major player in the securities scam

Income Tax Raids

THE same disregard for probity marked the Reserve Bank's action in permitting the CRB Capital Markets Limited to start a Mutual Fund (MF) and run a bank in the face of the raid by the Income-Tax authorities launched countrywide on its operations in November 1995 which unearthed documents relating to bogus companies and accounts amounting to Rs 12 crores The authorities also seized unaccounted cash of about Rs 2 crores (See "I-T authorities raided CRB group in '95"—a report by Shishir Gupta, *The Hindustan Times,* New Delhi, September 3, 1997) However, instead of pursuing the implications of this information, efforts were reported to be made to play down this fact, because that threatened to expose the corrupt ring in the Central Bureau of Direct Taxes (CBDT), where there was a deafening silence That was not all, even the other merchant bankers at one time warned fellow merchant bankers not to handle the public issues of the equity capital of the companies, if the issues were managed by the CRB Capital Markets There could be no greater denunciation of the credentials of the CRB Capital Markets Limited (CRBCML) than that by the members of the merchant banking community which normally would not speak against a fellow merchant banker It is interesting that one of the companies, whose public issue was managed by the CRBCM was, debarred by the SEBI from approaching the capital market and another company whose public issue was lead managed by the CRBCM was ordered to refund the amount raised from the public

That did not prevent the governmental financial regulatory agencies from allowing the CRB Capital Markets to launch new schemes and organisations to collect money from the unsuspecting public, which believed in the certificate of soundness of the CRB implicit in the clearance given by the country's most authoritative financial regulatory agencies like the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), with the country's largest commercial bank (State Bank of India) making its own contribution to build up the illusion of respectability and sound financial practices of the CRB In 1993 the CRB was permitted to form a Mutual Fund which launched the first scheme in August 1994 But the proneness of the CRB to indulge in irregularities prompted the SEBI to order an inspection of the operations of the CRB Mutual Fund The inspection resulted in leading the SEBI to stop the CRB Mutual Fund from launching any fresh schemes to mobilise funds from the public till June 1996

Permission to set up a Bank

YET the Reserve Bank of India went on according sanction to the CRB in October 1995 permitting the CRB to start a bank in the private sector and the sanction was communicated to the CRB in July 1996—notwithstanding the fact of the Income-Tax raids in November 1995 disclosing various types of malpractices resorted to by the CRB including registering bogus companies and accumulating unaccounted money and the SEBI action against the company The CRBCM was granted a licence to start a bank when similar applications from the Birlas, Tatas and Ambanis were rejected by the RBI—where all the officers upto the levels of General Manager gave an adverse report on the CRB proposal It clearly showed that the clearance was given by the superior authorities of the RBI as a deliberate decision (See the article "The Needle of suspicion must tick away" by Rajiv Goel in *The Economic Times*, Mumbai, July 21, 1997)

Influential Ministerial Backing for CRB

BUT the RBI was not alone in going out of its way in granting recognition and status to the CRB Others in the Government of India in New Delhi were as eager to humour the CRB magnate, Chain Roop Bhansali (CRB), obviously at the behest of some as

Years in pursuit of a vision

It was vision that made our freedom possible Then began a journey to fulfill that vision It's been uphill, all the way But we carried on And progressed Today, we can look back at the journey we've completed with pride And at the one ahead with hope

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yet unidentified individuals in the Union Finance Ministry and its Department of Company Affairs While the investigations into the Income-Tax raids were going on, the CRB group was given exemption under the provisions of Capital Gains Tax for its public issue of bonds, although in the meanwhile the SEBI had taken action against the CRB for Mutual Fund regulation violations and the Reserve Bank had revoked the banking licence Can public cheating go any further? The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) allowed the facility of Sanctions 54EA and 54EB (dealing with capital gains) of the Income Tax Act to the bond floated by the CRB This provision was newly incorporated in the Finance Act 1996 and came into effect from the October 1 of that year ("Raids on CRB Group being played down," *The Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, September 3, 1997, page 9) Very few companies have been accorded this privilege (*The Economic Times*, July 21, 1997, "The needle of suspicion must tick away" by Rajiv Goel)

As in all other such cases, Bhansali, the promoter of the CRB Capital Market (CRBCM), had private sector backers with formidable credentials who had great clout with the Government of India such as Dr Subramanian Swamy, President of the Janata Party (as distinct from the Janata Dal), who is on record having stated that Bnansali had approached him with CRISIL and CARE ratings, Arthur Anderson's analysis of the company's future and copies of rare media reviews (See *The Asian Age*, Mumbai, June 18, 1977 report entitled "Union Minister involved in CRB Scam Swamy") Dr Swamy also spoke of the involvement of a Union Cabinet Minister (*Ibid*) He further suggested that a commission of enquiry will unearth the deep-rooted ramifications of the CRB scam Even Dr Swamy, on his own admission, was led into canvassing for the grant of a licence to the CRB to start a bank (*Ibid*)

Withdrawal of Bank Licence

The reckless manner of functioning of the CRB, which of course had never given evidence of behaving in a responsible manner in the management of public funds, left the RBI with no choice other than to revoke the bank licence granted by itself within six months in December 1996 Once the CRB bluff was called the process of crumbling of the elaborate funds of the CRB empire assumed growing momentum from month to month leading to the final closure of the CRB on May 22, 1997 with the sealing of its offices by the order of the court and the announcement of the appointment of an official liquidator

The high level clearance for this tax concession was given by the CBDT on March 13, 1997, and within less than a month's time, on April 7, 1997 the RBI was so much rattled by the misdemeanour of the company as to restrain the CRB from disposing off its properties and two days later, on April 9, 1977 the RBI froze all the CRB assets and barred the CRB from accepting deposits C R Bhansali, who had grown rich and respectable by starting 100 companies across the country and could draw from the State Bank of India as much as Rs 58 crores against the deposit of a paltry Rs 50 lakhs, meekly asked the RBI to sell his assets and properties within two months of the CBDT's sanctioning of tax concession for the CRB funds

The CRB offices were closed on May 9, 1997 and by May 15, 1997 Bhansali, the would-be banker, disappearred from the country eventually to be arrested and charged in court (See *The Pioneer*, New Delhi, June 1977, "The Great CRB Crash" by Durbar Ganguly) This whole process shows how corrupt and useless the financial regulators set up by the Government of India have become That the mutching of public funds was also facilitated by the high grade rating 'A' given as late as in August 1996 to the CARE, one more agency floated in the era of "economic reforms" is another significant matter

Modus Operandi of Fund Mobilisation and Siphoning off of Funds

All the governmental financial regulating agencies took measures in 1995-96 to facilitate the mobilisation of the maximum amount of funds by the private financial companies In an unprecendented move the RBI removed all restraints on the raising of funds by these companies from the public Normally the RBI allows every company—financial and non-financial—to raise funds within stipulated limits both with regard to the amount they can raise and with regard to the rate of interest they can offer to induce the public to place an amount as deposit with the company In 1995 the Reserve Bank by an executive order removed the ceilings, both with regard to the rate of interest offered to the public and ceilings on the amount of deposit that can be raised by each company depending on its owned resources (equity capital plus reserves) Thus according to the origina stipulation a company could raise from the public deposits to the extent of 25 per cent of the aggregate paid-up capital and free reserves and a further 10 per cent from its own shareholders All companies were under this limit In 1995 the RBI changed the formula for financial companies and even a financia company just set up was enabled to borrow as much as the amount equal to the paid-up capital (Had it been older than one year, the company could have borrowed cent per cent of its reserves also which, in this particular instance, the company could not do for the simple reason that before completing even one year of working it could not build up reserves I am referring to the L&T Finance Ltd , set up in 1995 and immediately allowed to raise deposits from the public to the extent of its paid up capital, which in 1995 was Rs 30 crores) But the shaky condition of the financial companies has since obliged the RBI to revert to the original stipulation of interest rates not exceeding 15 per cent and the extent to which a company can raise deposits

The frequent changes of norms by the country's central bank smacks of amateurishness bordering on fickleness and strongly arouses the suspicion of increasing corruption in the Reserve Bank of India

Strange Action of SEBI

THE Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) also made such modifications in the manner of raising capital from the public as are simply preposterous and least expected of an official regulatory agency Heretofore, unless a company was able to raise 90 per cent of the amount offered to the public, the company was obliged to refund the subscription But it relaxed this stipulation in the case of selected companies and they were permitted to retain the amount subscribed irrespective of the extent of public subscription In the case of financial companies it also dispensed with the stipulation that for loans raised a company must regularly contribute to build up a debenture redemption reserve When public sector banks have been increasingly becoming financially non-viable it is strange, to say the least, that a financial regulatory agency should be relaxing the provision of building up a debenture redemption reserve The SEBI ought to have tightened the control, instead it chose to relax Interestingly there was no public outcry against this deception practised upon the people which has gone virtually unnoticed

Role of State Bank of India

THE State Bank has emerged as the leader of building up financial scams The bank has made it possible for even the lowly peon working in the bank to take away crores of rupees, as happened in the Ahmedabad branch of the bank a few years ago The bank is involved in all the known scams—the securities scam, the National Fertiliser scam (in which a foreign Turkish firm was involved), the CRB scam, to name only the recent major scams In the sixties there was the mysterious and as yet unsolved Nagarwala scam (all the related persons were conveniently dead as all of them were arranged to die an unnatural death).

The CRB scam in which the bank itself was defrauded of crores of rupees was itself initiated by a circular of the State Bank's own highly-placed General Manager relaxing the limits imposed jointly by both the CRB and State Bank on amounts that can be paid by a particular warrant According to the State Bank of India Officers Association (SBIOA), on February 13, 1997 the State Bank's General Manager issued a circular saying

> In case of warrants above Rs 10,000 or Rs 20,000 signatures of any one of the above (Mr C R Bhansali or Mrs Bhansali) is allowed to alter the pre-printed limits on the warrants by signing the limits manually
>
> (See the report "SBI circular on warrants led to CRB scam, say Bank's officers"—*The Economic Times* Mumbai, June 18, 1997)

According to VS Samant, President of the All India State Bank of India Officers' Federation (AISBOF), Mumbai circle,

> the removal of the limits on the warrants opened ,the floodgates for the Rs 60-crore outflow Otherwise it would have been limited to a few lakhs (*Ibid*)

The date of the circular needs to be specially noticed Already the SEBI had punished the CRB Mutual Fund, the Reserve Bank had withdrawn the banking licence, Income-Tax raids had revealed the operation of bogus firms by Bhansali and disclosed unaccounted money by these companies and still the State Bank General Manager relaxed the norms jointly fixed by the CRB and State Bank Do you still require evidence of high-level collusion?

Appearance of Action to Cover Inaction

THE responses of the Reserve Bank and State Bank have been typical of recent efforts to cover up criminal action by the appearance of taking corrective action while no action is taken The Reserve Bank suspended the facility of at par payment by banks which the corporate sector had been enjoying for many years without any known complaint from anyone Other companies were suddenly confronted with a situation which no one could have foreseen and thousands, lakhs of individuals were put to extreme difficulties For the fault of one company and his accomplices in the bank, all good companies and innocent investors were punished

The State Bank's action was funnier still It suspended three junior officers for the CRB scam for which they were not responsible at all but took care not to punish the General Manager whose circular had facilitated the scam The State Bank staff went on strike putting lakhs of depositors into terrible inconvenience and loss Incredibly, after a few days of strike the bank management unilaterally withdrew the charges against two of the three suspended persons with a promise to bring a formal chargesheet against the third man within one month, failing which he was to be reinstated No chargesheet was proferred against him and he was eventually reinstated The bank's ill-conceived suspension of uninvolved persons had the only tangible consequence of forced closure of banking operations for a few days and the consequent inconvenience to the public Nobody got punished for either the scam or the public inconvenience arising out of the diversionary action of the State Bank's management Nobody even lost the job on account of the bungling and inefficiency And we still expect the public sector to perform?

"Private" Placement

THE scope for financial manipulation has been carefully left by the corporate law, as passed by Parliament, through "private" placement of equity capital and through what has come to be known as "preferential" allotment of shares to particular persons (rather than giving an offer to all shareholders or the public to subscribe to capital, which was the norm so long in the country) The CRB Mutual Fund money was siphoned off through the means of "doctored" private placement in private (closely held) and unlisted (in any stock exchange) companies of the CRB group This way Rs 229 25 crores of the CRB Mutual Fund's initial corpus was diverted

Sourav Mukherjee writes in *The Economic Times* of Mumbai dated June 2, 1997.

> While there are unsubstantiated allegations that CRB Mutual Fund and these corporate investors had entered into certain *quid pro quo* arrangements of a questionable nature, the systematic defrauding of these corporate investors began in 1995-96 when the fund corpus was allegedly diverted into private, unlisted and dud companies within the CRB group
>
> The private placement route was used as the prime conduit for diversion of funds as it exists beyond the pale of SEBI regulation However, as a percaution against any sudden inspection, efforts were made to ensure that these dud companies had ready 'draft prospectuses' on the shelf and were seen as ready candidates for an imminent public issue This helped the deals look like prepublic issue placements It is believed that most of these draft prospectuses were actually direct photocopies of the existing prospectuses of established and listed companies in the same line of business
>
> In fact, several of these companies have figured in the 1996-97 portfolio of CRB Mutual Fund These include Rashmirita Exports Ltd , Vibgyor Exports Ltd , Shyamkunj Granite Ltd , Spectrum Resources Ltd , Soyuz Impex Ltd , Sidh Equipment Leasing Ltd , Shrenik Commercial Co Ltd , Shree Bhikshu Foundation Ltd , Pelicon Fabrics Ltd , Param Trading Ltd , Indramani India Ltd , Haengnam RNT Stoneware Ltd , and Babubali Commercial Ltd On the other hand, several other companies like Chamatkar Investments P Ltd , Exxon Fin Services, Golden Meadows and Shrenik Investments Ltd , do not appear in the books of CRB MF only because their shares were not transferred If the rumblings are to be believed, it seems the entire operation was designed to ensure that the funds were shifted from the mutual fund to build C R Bhansali's private empire
>
> (Source "CRBMF used private placements to divert funds" by Souray Mukherjee, *The Economic Times*, Mumbai, June 2, 1997, page 1)

Induced Irresponsibility

PERHAPS it is unjust to criticise the private corporate sector for the financial scams, when the Finance Ministry, Reserve Bank and SEBI are vying with one another to facilitate scams When, according to the Reserve Bank's own estimate, the non-performing assets of nationalised banks hovered around Rs 4000 crores ("NPAs hover around Rs 4000-cr mark", *The Times of India*, Mumbai, February 12, 1997), the Reserve Bank—none else—issued a circular urging banks to lend money even beyond the discretionary limit This incredible "advice" was contained in a Reserve Bank Circular which said

> If the bank boards find that the existing discretionary powers granted to officials at various levels are not sufficient to meet the increased columns of business and the needs of borrowers, then the Board may suitably enhance the discretionary powers at various levels
>
> ("Banks told to lend beyond discretionary limits" by Amit Goel and Jaideep Lahiri, *The Economic Times*, Mumbai, December 16, 1996)

Yet only less than a fortnight later, the Governor of the Reserve Bank was singing the virtues of the introduction of prudential norms in his V K R V Rao lectures in Bangalore (See "Rangarajan defends prudential norms", *The Times of India*, Mumbai, January 2, 1997) The double-talk of the Reserve Bank is endless and listing them would fill volumes

This then is a very inadequate description of a scam in which unwary investors were induced by the action of the SEBI, Reserve Bank and the Union Ministry of Finance, and the citizens are left with no means of either punishing the so-called regulators (whose job seems to facilitate scamstars) or recovering their loss Was Lenin so very wrong in describing the state as an instrument for legitimising the exploitation of the common man by the powerful ones? ■

American People and US Foreign Policy

RAGHUBANSH

Democratic foreign policy dictates that public opinion be taken into account in the conduct of a nation's external affairs The Clinton Administration has accordingly tailored its "internationalist activism" to fit the constraints of a popular mood that is disinclined to sacrifice blood and treasure in the name of overseas commitments Even Clinton's boldest overseas adventures in Bosnia and Haiti had come only after strenuous and prolonged efforts to avoid intervention In the ongoing stand-off between the United States and Iraq, apart from Britain, the US has been unable to convince others, including Kuwait, to go against its public opinion and support use of the American force against Sadam Hussain An ABC-TV survey shows that not only in the Arab world, but even among Washington's Western allies there is little support for a military strike against Iraq for the latter's non-compliance with the UN resolutions As such President Clinton now shoulders the burden of rallying public opinion in the US in case it has to act unilaterally even without the UN Security Council approval

Historically, American public opinion on foreign policy and security issues has been characterised as "isolationist" or "non-internationalist" Even today at the thosehold of the twentyfirst century when the international scene is characterised by global interdependence and integrated information network, together with heightened importance of economic and environmental issues, American public opinion not only continues to be inwardly based and domestically oriented but only a minority of the public pays close attention to foreign affairs As such, whether during the Cold War period or today in the 'New World Order', a strong aversion to using American troops is evident in most of the public opinion polls The fact is that the American public is willing to let its troops into combat only when it perceives a clear threat to US interest

Tracking contemporary American foreign policy for the American people as well as the outside world has become difficult and complicated because the "New World Order" no longer provides them the luxury to assess it from the simpified Cold War mentality Moreover, public opinion is influenced heavily by the media framing the issue[1] Journalist Walter Lippman observed as early as in 1920 that the images the public received from news about world affairs were designed to create public support for policies, not to bring the public into the decision-making process itself[2] The anti-Vietnam War consensus, the Gulf of Tonkin controversy, the alleged Kennedy era "missile gap", the "window of vulnerability" in national security of the Reagan Administration and more recently, the role of the media during the Gulf War[3]—all these raise critical questions about the possibilities for and actual occurence of manipulation and deception of public opinion In 1992 TV images of starvation in Somalia helped mobilise an international humanitarian intervention punctuated by a large US military presence Another image of an American pilot being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu led to the withdrawal of American marines from Somalia

As a result the manipulation of the media has not only put American foreign policy on the "deadline", but transformed its substance to fit what may be misleading yet convincing TV images[4] Moreover, the crystallisaton of public opinion depends on the range of public debate among the foreign policy elites, which gets widened only with increasing conflict among the powerful players in the policy situation on Capital Hill and White House, alongwith the State Department and the Defence Department

Having a popular executive American public opinion is taken into consideration more at the White House level than at the State Department or Defence Department, where a residue of professional opposition to giving public opinion a primary role in decision-making continues to exist[5] Historically, all Presidents since F D Roosevelt have followed public opinion polls and used them in their decision-making, though with varying degrees, that fit no easy characterisation in terms of party ideology or time period In the post-War period, Roosevelt and Reagan understood the opinion-policy relationship well, while Truman, Johnson, Nixon and Carter made only limited use of it in deciding critical foreign policy and national security issues Roosevelt's understanding of public opinion against isolationism helped him overcome strong Congressional pressure and precipitate US involvement in World War II much before the Pearl Harbour incident As much as the Administrations of Johnson and Nixon tried to

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justify the Vietnam War, widespread public opinion against US involvement in the conflict not only resulted in the US defeat but as a consequence the 'Vietnam syndrome' haunted American foreign policy-makers for the rest of the Cold War era

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In the early 1980s, when the Reagan Administration, while advocating the "window of vulnerability" theory, took arms control off its agenda and talked about fighting a nuclear war, the grassroot nuclear freeze movement pressured it to resume arms control negotiations with the Soviets On the other hand, Reagan's arms control opponents' ignorance and disdain for public opinion made it difficult for them to devise a political strategy that would have significantly halted American arms build-up, even though their criticism, particularly of the SDI project, were strong on technical and strategic grounds

The Bush Presidency in an era of change used public opinion moderately Former President Bush's commitment of US troops in the Gulf War had the approval of almost 90 per cent of American citizens Clinton comprehended the American public opinion well to coin the slogan "it's the economy stupid" in the '92 election and accordingly attempted to provide global leadership on the cheap The continuing hostility of the US Administrations towards the Castro regime is based on the belief that public opinion, particularly in the southern State of Florida, would disapprove of any friendly gestures

The elitist paradigm in foreign policy, however, has argued that public opinion is volatile, moody, unstructured and poorly informed, changed through a top-down process and not particularly significant in American foreign policy deicison-making Bernard Cohen, one of its main proponents, discounted any role of public opinion in such critical foreign policy deicisons like the formation of the United Nations, recognition of the former Soviet Union, formation of the Truman Doctrine and non-recognition of Communist China in the 1960s[6]

Moreover, since the 1950s when the former Soviet Union's nuclear capability became known, American public has rejected the 'first use' of nuclear weapons, yet there has remained a bipartism support for the strategy of massive retaliation and flexible response that places the threat to use nuclear weapons at the centre of US defence and foreign policy Similarly, many studies have even challenged the concept of "Cold War attitudes consensus" The implementation of the American foreign policy agenda in Central America in the 1980s was highly unpopular with the American citizens The conduct of US foreign policy with China since the 1989 Tinanmen Square tragedy, and particularly with the Clinton Administration's delinking of trade from the human rights issue, has eroded the American people's faith in democratic values

Moreover, basing foreign policy objectives solely on the prevailing public opinion is an 'invitation to instability' because public opinion is vulnerable to about-turns with new scenarios The Iran hostage crisis of 1979 and the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan increased support for American defence spendings Though there was a lack of American public support for the 1983 US invasion of Grenada, scenes of students returning and justifying it, increased public opinion in its favour In the aftermath of the Gulf War in 1990 there was a dramatic rise of support for the US taking an active part in world affairs, it rose from 71 per cent to 75 per cent, and support for US membership of the UN increased to a high of 90 per cent With the end of the Cold War and the disappearance of the former Soviet communist state itself, public support to the 'evil empire to utilise American fund' shot up by 30 per cent[7]

As such, the apparent effect of public opinion on American foreign and defence policies might be illusory But to many a policy analyst even a semblance of influence is a regrettable state of affairs Evidently though there is little reason to fear the effects of public opinion on foreign policy Above all, the idea of a democracy suggests a more widespread dissemination of information to ensure that authentic public opinion is formed so that elected representatives pay greater heed to their constituents in formulating and implementing the country's foreign policy agenda—a sure way to bridge the gap between the much-acclaimed American foreign policy ideals and the discredited goals and means to implement the same ■

NOTES

[1] See, Shanto Iyengar, *Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frame Political Issues* (Chicago University of Chicago Press, 1922)

[2] Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York Free Press, 1922)

[3] Lewis A Friedland, "Democratic, Diversity, and Cable The Case of CNN", University of Wisconsin, 1991, p 4

[4] A Lloyd Cutler, "Foreign Policy on Deadline" *Foreign Policy* 56 (Fall 1984), pp 113-128

[5] Powlick, Philip , "The Attitudinal Bases for Responsiveness to Public Opinion among American Foreign Policy Officials", *Journal of Conflict Resolutions* 35, no 4 (December 1991), pp 611-641

[6] Bernard C Cohen, *The Public's Impact on Foreign Policy* (Boston Little Brown, 1973)

[7] D Alvin Richman, "The Polls-Polls Trends, Changing American Attitudes Towards the Soviet Union", *Public Opinion Quarterly* 55 (1991), pp 131-148

Nepal's Fledgling Democracy

MOLLICA DASTIDAR

The Surya Bahadur Thapa-led coalition government of the new Rashtriya Praja Party, Nepali Congress, and Nepali Sadbhawana Party is the fourth Nepalese Government to have been sworn in the past three years. An unique feature indeed for a country which has embarked upon a democratic political system as recently as in 1990. Though little did the people of this Himalayan Kingdom know that their struggle for democracy and eventual establishment of a multi-party system replacing the rule of authoritarian monarchy, would usher in an era of such political instability and uncertainty. Thanks to the misadventures of the power-hungry leaders, Nepal is witnessing a veritable game of musical chairs for the PM's seat indulged in by almost the entire political leadership in the country.

True, the present composition of the parliament doesn't allow any single party to rule with a simple majority. The Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) with 88 seats, the Nepali Congress (NC) with 83 seats, and the Rashtriya Praja Party (RPP) with 19 seats are nowhere near the 103 figure required to muster a simple majority in the 205-member Lower House of the parliament. But the situation is murkier because of the rivalry between the two major parties—the CPN-UML and the NC. Their one-point programme of keeping the other party out of power by any means has helped the pro-Palace RPP (a party of the ex-Panchayat rulers) assume the role of a kingmaker. The very fact that the RPP with just 19 members in the parliament has got the distinction of providing two Prime Ministers within a period of just seven months, explains the state of party politics in Nepal. Ironically, the same forces who fought jointly to restore people's rule in the country not only failed to carry forward and consolidate the democratic values and ideals, in their bitter struggle for power they didn't even hesitate to bring the monarchists back to the political centre-stage.

In March this year when the Communists joined hands with the Palace loyalists (RPP) to form the Lokendra Bahadur Chand (the much attacked Panchayat Prime Minister during the pro-democracy movement of 1989-90)-led coalition government, one of the widely circulated Nepali weeklies wrote:

> Sheltering under the liberal policies of the Nepali Congress and assisted by the Leftists, reactionary forces in the country have again succeeded in making a mockery of democratic values and ideals and parliamentary traditions.
>
> (*Saptahik Bimarsh*, March 14, 1997)

The Congress followed suit, and barely six months after the Chand Ministry had been sworn in, Chand's arch rival and RPP President, Surya Bahadur Thapa, with the support of NC legislators and his own party MPs from the Chand camp, dislodged his bete-noire to become the Prime Minister once again (but unlike the Panchayat days, this time he is not handpicked by the King but by the leaders for democracy). The reinstallation of the two former Panchayat rulers by the same people (NC and CPN-UML)—who had severely attacked them for being stooges of the monarchy and patrons of partyless autocratic rule—only exposes the ideological bankruptcy of the pro-democracy leadership in Nepal. In their acts both the NC and CPN-UML leaderships have shown their total disregard of the popular mandate and have neglected the democratic aspirations of the people as they brought back the same elements who had been brushed aside by the people as contemptible remnants of Palace politics in post-1990 Nepal.

Crisis lies Within

THE growth and consolidation of the institution of political parties in democratic Nepal is greatly impaired by the insurmountable factionalism in every political party. The inner-party schisms and tremendous desire of the leaders of each faction to score over the others, can best be explained in the persisting feudal characteristics within the Centrist parties like the NC and RPP, where the age-old patron-client relationship still holds sway, with little or no scope for inner-party democracy. Top leaders are judged not by their commitment to the party and its ideology but by the number of followers they have in their respective camps. This legacy of patron-client correlation not only determines the standing of the leaders in the party, but also make the leaders a kind of prisoner in the hands of their own followers—whose demands compel them to get engaged in power struggle. The troika politics and rivalry among the top three Nepali Congress leaders—Ganesh Man Singh, K P Bhattarai and G P Koirala—had virtually led to the fall of their own elected government in 1994. Although the power equations have changed, the NC still remains as divided as ever on the leadership issue.

As for the RPP, the party was formed by ex-Panchayat

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rulers essentially to become socially and politically acceptable in the changed post-1990 democratic Nepal Hence the power struggle between Surya B Thapa and Lokendra B Chand is seen as not much of an aberration, as the party is not known for its commitment to democracy but is rather an opportunistic offshoot of multi-party democracy

The Communist Party of Nepal-UML, which unlike its other revolutionary counterparts has adopted the path of parliamentary democracy, is also beset with serious factionalism However, their inner-party rivalry is not attributed to feudal mindsets, the differences (between leaders like Madhav Nepal and Bamdev Gautam) are more over mechanisms of governance and over alliances with the Centrist forces The credibility of the Communists suffered a serious setback when the Bamdev Gautam (a Polit-Bureau member) faction's stand, in support of an alliance with the RPP under the RPP's Prime Ministership, was adopted by the party But quite expectedly this unholy alliance came under sharp criticism from the anti-Gautam, Madhav Nepal faction in the UML, thus making the six-month tenure of the government a mockery of coalition rule

Commenting on the trend of party politics in Nepal, Lok Raj Baral, an eminent social scientist, attributes the origin and development of major political parties as crucial factors, while pointing out that both the NC and CPN-UML, though they existed before the 1990 movement for democracy, did not originate within legislatures, nor were they created as a result of long-time democratic and semi-democratic practices According to Baral, the two principal parties' extra-parliamentary origins and development had its natural impact on their organisational characteristics Moreover, the hostile political environments during 30 long years of royal rule also hardly gave them any scope for institutionalisation

Sign of Hope

In the past few years amidst the chaotic political scenario with persisting crisis in leadership and governance—the only redeeming feature has been the resilience of the *hoi polloi* of Nepal in keeping their democratic aspirations alive In fact the political consciousness of the common people and their firm faith in people's rule as against the feudal authoritarian political system, is far more commendable than the role played by their leaders in safeguarding the hard earned democracy

The democratic consciousness of the Nepali masses undoubtedly has been the most positive contribution of the Kingdom's transition from a system of absolute monarchy to constitutional monarchy And this alone has ensured that Nepal's progress towards a modern state with popular sovereignty is irreversible The overwhelming reason as to why the monarchy has remained confined within its constitutional authority all along the period of uncertain political future is precisely because of the indomitable public support for popular rule The King deserves appreciation for his restrained actions and for reconciling with his new status even while the idiocies of the de facto leaders had been dragging the Palace into the political centre-stage time and again Nevertheless, if the influence of the royalist RPP continues to grow in lieu of heading coalition governments, then for obvious reasons the monarchy would be playing an influential role in the affairs of the state (though indirectly) once again through its own men in the decision-making body

Need of the Hour

The Supreme Court's judgement in 1995 stipulating that Parliament cannot be dissolved for fresh elections if it is possible to form a government from within the existing House, had made it mandatory for the King to act according to Article 42 (Cl 1) of the 1990 Constitution, and thus invite the person who can command a majority on the strength of two or more parties represented in the House However, the experience since the fall of the minority CPN-UML Government in June 1995 tells us that successive governments formed out of opportunistic alliances have only reduced democracy into a farcical exercise of numbers Against the argument that in an extremely poor country like Nepal the financial burden of another election before the completion of the parliament's five-year term would be very harmful for the country's economy, it may be pointed out that adopting the other option hasn't helped the country's limited economic resources either Frequent changes in governments has only resulted in the formation of meaningless huge Ministries (in order to accommodate the demands of all the coalition partners, the 47-member Deuba Ministry is a good example in this regard) Needless to say the country's economy has been badly affected by catering to the financial and material needs of such large numbers of Ministers More importantly, the uncertain future of each government has prompted the executive to take only political decisions rather than any long-term developmental programme Especially when the *raison d'etre* of each government formation is solely guided by the incumbent's (political party's) need for the advantage of office during elections Thus the present parliamentary set-up is not only proving costly for the country's democratic system but for its precarious economy too

In the given situation, it seems that a mid-term poll under a neutral caretaker government is the only way out for saving the country's political as well as economic future Hence the need for a decisive mandate has become quintessential to put the fledgling democracy in this Himalayan Kingdom firmly on its track ■

Plight of the Bhutia-Lepchas : Perils of State Formation

J.J ROY BURMAN

Sikkim is a tiny State of the Himalayas occupying geo-politically a very strategic position It is located between Nepal on the west, China on the north, Bhutan on its east The State of West Bengal adjoins it on the south and south-western borders The history of Sikkim is shrouded in mystery There is no definite history of its ancient past, but it is commonly acknowledged that a kingship was established there in 1642, and this continued till the State became a part of India

Ethnically, Sikkim has three main communities—the aboriginal Lepchas who prefer to call themselves 'Rong', the Bhutias who call themselves 'Lhopo' and the Nepalese The Nepalese are a highly heterogeneous group Among them the Subbas or the Limbus, who prefer to be known as 'Chhong', are perhaps the most preponderant and are believed to be one of the early settlers in the State The other Nepalese communities have migrated to Sikkim mainly towards the end of the last century and their migration continues even today The Bhutias and Lepchas try to draw closer affinity among themselves by tracing their descent from a legendary Bhutia chieftain called Khye Bumsa (who originally hailed from the Kham province of Tibet) and a wizardly Lepcha chief called Thekok Tek, who entered into a blood brotherhood treaty sometimes around ninth century AD Based on this treaty the institution of Chogyal or 'Dharmaraja' was established in 1642, which was commonly accepted by Bhutias, Lepchas and the Chhongs—at the time of the first coronation at Yaksom in West Sikkim The Bhutias are also believed to be the descendants of the Tibetan pastoral trading groups who married that indigenous Lepcha people It is commonly believed that the alliance with the Chhongs was drawn up by the first Chogyal by marrying the daughter of a chief from that community. But in spite of this the relationship between the Lepcha-Bhutias and the Nepalese have been quite tenuous, if not hostile

The Lepchas and Bhutias became quite restive about the Nepalese influx right in the last century when the British deliberately encouraged their immigration so as to curb their sphere of influence The situation turned worse ever since Sikkim got merged with the Union of India, to become the twentysecond State, in 1975 Both the communities suffer from an intense sense of deprival and injustice meted out to them ever since For the reason that all political powers and privileges were abrogated from the Bhutia king or the Chogyal, the hurt feeling seems to be more intense among the Bhutias There are other important factors too behind such resentment, this will be discussed later

The sense of resentment was articulated by the dominant majority of the Bhutias right at the time of the merger in 1974-75 But this could not be sustained mainly in the face of the political pressures backed up mainly by the Nepalese population who constitute the majority population of the State The Bhutia frustration did not decrease and it has been often manifested through the memoranda submitted by different Bhutia organisations to the organs of the State and other fora In October 1986, for instance, the Sikkim Tribal Welfare Association (STWA), wrote the following in its address to the Governor

> With the passage of time, the original inhabitants of Sikkim, namely, the Bhutia-Lepcha tribals, have been reduced to a minority in our homeland thus endangering our very survival in the land of our origin The gradual disintegration and destruction of our distinct socio-cultural identity over the past few decades and specially since the merger in 1975, has been the cause of much suspicion and insecurity amongst the tribal community who have lived in peace and harmony in the past so many centuries

This apprehension appears to be quite genuine considering the fact that while in 1891, the Bhutia-Lepcha and the Nepalese population comprised about 43 per cent and 30 per cent of the population respectively, presently the ratio has been reversed to about 22 per cent and 75 per cent of the population respectively The position seems to be getting worse considering the fact in the decade immediately following the merger, that is, 1971-81, Sikkim

The author belongs to the TATA Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai witnessed a phenomenal growth in population from 2 10 lakhs to 3 16 lakhs The tribals have been all the more distressed since several thousands of Nepalese were reportedly granted Sikkimese citizenship out of turn and enrolled in the electoral list during the tenureship of L D. Kazi, the first Chief Minister, as well as that of Narbahadur Bhandari who took charge as the head of the State Government later

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AT the time of merger, many of the Bhutia-Lepchas were indeed against the rule of the Chogyal—which was rather interpreted as autocratic, particularly in the context of the system which perpetrated Kaziship or a system of feudalism—this may have grown out of the colonial legacy, about which no thorough study has been done But although the pro-democratic Bhutia-Lepcha forces were opposed to the feudal structure with the Chogyal as the head, they were also opposed to the complete obliteration of their rights and privileges which they enjoyed being the autochthonous people of the State They were particularly keen to preserve their rights over the land which was largely protected though the Revenue Order No.1, issued in 1917 stipulating that no Bhutia-Lepcha land could be alienated to outsiders through sale or by any form of deeds The Bhutia-Lepcha people were also interested in safeguarding their cultural and social identities enshrined in the customary laws Keeping these in consideration, they were largely successful in enacting an Act in the Constitution of India, that is, Article 371 F of the Indian Constitution

Article 371 F was enacted specially with regard to the Sikkim State only so as to enable it to maintain the old pre-merger regulations of the erstwhile Sikkim State. This the Bhutia-Lepcha people expected would at least protect their right of parity—that is, equal representation of seats in the State Assembly—between the Bhutia-Lepchas and the Nepalese population—as was affirmed in the May 8 agreement in 1973 between Chogyal, the people of Sikkim and the Government of India. The tribal people were at least feeling secured that clauses (f) and (k) of Article 371 F will ensure their political security in spite of the merger. Clause (f) of this article stipulates:

> Parliament may, for the purpose of protecting the rights and interests of different sections of the population of Sikkim make provisions for the number of seats in the Legislative Assembly of the State of Sikkim which may be filled by candidates belonging to such sections and for the delimitation of the Assembly constituencies from which candidates belonging to such sections alone may stand for election to the Legislative Assembly of the State of Sikkim

Clause (k) of the same Act on the other hand stipulates.

> All laws in force immediately before the appointed day in the territories comprised in the State of Sikkim or any other part thereof shall continue to be in force therein until amended or repealed by a competent Legislation or other competent authority

Mainly on the principle laid down in the May 3 agreement of 1973, an election for the Sikkim Assembly was held in 1974 in which out of a House of 32 seats, 15 seats were reserved for Bhutia-Lepchas, 15 for Nepalese, one for the Scheduled Castes and one for the Sangha

The expectations of the Bhutia-Lepchas that their political rights will be safeguarded through Article 371 F, met with a rude jolt as according to the amendment of Section 7 of Act 43—People' Representation Act (1950-51), passed in 1980—the number of reserved seats for the Bhutia-Lepchas was reduced to 12 from 15. On the other hand, reservation for all the 15 seats reserved for the Nepalese was withdrawn The then Law Minister of India argued that this was needed, since under the existing arrangement there was scope for people other than the Nepalese, Bhutias and Lepchas to contest the elections The Minister also clarified that the amendment was being made not only to permit other sections of the people to contest the elections but also to safeguard the Bhutias and Lepchas (who are the aboriginal people of the State) whose interests, if they are represented according to their population ratio, will not be adequately protected

The Bhutia-Lepcha people, however, felt that this was a let-down and as such went against the principle of Article 371 F They demanded that the old parity system should have been retained They stated that there must be a Nepalese conspiracy behind it as the two seats reserved for the Nepalese Scheduled Castes was quite unjust and if the government was really sincere in its intentions to ensure equal opportunity for all sections of the population in the Assembly then there was no need to reserve the SC seats for only the Nepalese SCs

Significantly, compared to the Lepchas, the Bhutias were worse hit by the amendment of the People's Representation Act, as the Act included under the nomenclature of Bhutias eight other ethnic entities who are not known to be the aboriginals of the State and are believed to have migrated into the State within this century (unfortunately no other earlier government documents eyer clarified who the Bhutias in Sikkim are, though generally it is commonly shared by all that they are the Lhopos who are also popularly referred as Denzongpas) These groups are Chumbipa, Dopthapa, Dukpa, Kagatey, Sherpa, Tibetan, Tromopa and Yolmo This was basically done on the basis of the Scheduled Tribe Order of 1978 Though not stated anywhere, one of the reasons for this was perhaps also reserve seats of the tribes other than the Bhutia-Lepchas who are presently residing in the State

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THE Bhutias, however, suspect a deeper conspiracy behind this move on the part of other dominant ethnic entities After all, according to the history laid down by the British, the Bhutias basically comprise of the profligate migrant population from Tibet, who by miscegenating with the aboriginal Lepchas, grabbed political power of the State As stated earlier, the British too were not very comfortable with the Bhutia rulers and had encouraged large-scale migration of the people from Nepal to counter them The Lepchas often resented of having been politically dominated by the Bhutias who basically too were migrants

Whatever may have happened politically, it is a wonder how technically discrete entities like Kagate, Yalmo, Tibetan and Sherpa could have been clubbed under the rubric of Bhutia Although groups like Sherpa are also called Bhutia in Nepal, there was never such instances in Sikkim They have migrated to the State in large numbers from Nepal only in this century and are also often called Nepalese in the areas of their concentration In the adjoining areas of West Bengal as well the groups like Kagate, Yalmo, Sherpa and Tibetans have been identified separately It is surprising that the Tribal Order of 1978 was not challenged in the courts on the ground of ethnic obliteration

Technically, while on the one hand the Bhutias might face a hitch on the ground that no past documents clarify the term 'Bhutia' in Sikkim, on the other hand, in different parts of the State, they identify themselves separately on the basis of the locality from which they come—for example, a Bhutia or Lachung calls himself a Lachungpa or a Bhutia of Lachen would identify himself as Lachenpa Even the term Denzongpa, which many of the Bhutias associate themselves with, is not a very clear nomenclature, as many of the Lepchas too use the same term for identification After all, the term Denzongpa means 'the people from the valley of rice', which is Sikkim in other words

Apart from the issue of violation of Article 371 F the Bhutia-Lepcha people are also intrigued over the fact that the constituencies reserved for them are not always congruous with their areas of preponderance Only in two of the 32 constituencies are the tribals in a majority Consequently, they have to by and large depend on the desires of the majority Nepalese people The reservation of seats for them, therefore, is of little consequence to safeguard their political interests

Besides the issue of reservation of seats, the Lepcha-Bhutias are also very much alarmed over the issue of alienation of their lands Introduction of cardamom cultivation replacing the traditional cereal, beans and pulses at the subsistence level in this century, has fetched a lot of cash flow to them and this has subsequently weaned them away from the primary sector to the tertiary sector Many of them have also become habituated to drinking and gambling All these have rather increased the inflow of Nepalese wage labourers and share-croppers The call for democracy and so-called radical pronouncements of land to the tillers alongwith weeding out of Kaziship have ultimately seen many of the tribal lands being handed out to the migrant Nepalese people The baby got thrown out with the bathwater

Unfortunately, all the previous knowledge apparently has had little impact on the land policies of the ruling governments In recent years, the present government has launched a scheme called 'Sukhumbasi Land Bank Scheme' According to this scheme, the government has decided to grant at least half acre of land to the bonafide landless citizens of Sikkim The scheme will cover 20 beneficiaries in each of the 31 Assembly constituencies and thus 10 acres of land would be distributed The government has decided to acquire this land by purchasing land for the Sikkimese people who would like to sell their land on their own volition It has been decided that Rs 20,000-25,000 per acre will be paid and a total amount of Rs 65 60 lakhs has been stipulated for the entire scheme in the year 1996-97 By taking this step, the government has avoided the legal complication entailed in the Revenue No 1 order

The ground realities, however, indicate that most of the land sold to the government under this scheme belong to the Bhutia-Lepchas The background of the beneficiaries, on the other hand, indicate that they are by overwhelming majority from the Nepalese communities A list of 50 beneficiaries in Wok constituency in South Sikkim, for instance, is reported to include only one Lepcha and 49 Nepalese people

This is the tragedy of a contrived radical policy!

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Apart from this, it may also be pointed out that a lot of land is reportedly in the hands of Nepalese migrants who had taken forests land on lease for cardamom cultivation Presently, according to the Forest Conservation Act of 1980, no such leases can continue But in a number of villages like Khardum, Sardum, etc right across Gangtok and other places, the rich influential Nepalese have clung on to the cardamom fields At times they are reported to have even challenged the authority of the Forest Department and a number of cases in this regard are pending in the courts

It is also important to note that demographically the Lepcha-Bhutia people have not taken any concerted action either Significantly, the rate of family planning is highest amongst the Scheduled Tribes compared to the other ethnic entities While the STs comprise only about 25 per cent of the population, there were from them 1416 family planning adopters in 1990-94, but there were only 2808 adopters from the others castes (mainly the Nepalese who comprise approximately 70 per cent of the State population) The government also has not shown sagacity to keep a check on undue infiltration and providing false citizenships to the Nepalese immigrants by giving the Health Department the exclusive responsibility to register births and deaths. For a counter-check, the responsibility should have been perhaps vested with the Home Department, particularly when the citizenship issue is of such great importance to the State

It is rather tragic that in spite of all the odds the Bhutia-Lepcha people have hardly been able to forge a united front to counter the phenomenon of Nepalese influx and domination The Lepcha people are perhaps on a slightly better footing as they have been able to foist a number of cultural groups such as the Tarzum in South Sikkim and the Lom Al Sherzum in North Sikkim. The main objective of these groups is to unite the Lepchas and safeguard their identities by reviving their traditional cultural festivals like Namsoon or by distributing audio cassettes containing their traditional folk songs, legends, etc Though the Bhutias have formed several splinter groups, they have hardly been able to unite the tribe as a whole Many of the Bhutias have taken advantage of their traditional landholding pattern, cardamom fields and higher educational attainment to get into the government sector or to take up contract works But this has also reportedly set in a lot of corruption—perhaps not out of design of the Central Government—among them This consequently has also deterred them from forging unity among themselves The ethnic Nepalese backlash, manifested through intrusion of various Hindu cults and sects, is also deeply affecting the interests of the Bhutia-Lepchas of the State, which cannot go unnoticed

The problems of Sikkim, however, possibly are much deeper thant the reasons stated here These are basically rooted to the formation of the State itself It should not be forgotten that historically the Bhutias in the State thrived on their transhumance pattern between Sikkim and Tibet Besides pastoral nomadism, trade was another vital source of contact However, all these vanished with the formation of arbitrary border demarcations and simmering conflicts between India and China Basically India as a post-colonial state was also compelled to adopt measures taking into consideration the developments across the border and also at a time when the Sino-American friendship was taking a menacing turn during the Cold War era The situation has changed much today and the opening up of the borders between Tibet and China through Nathu La can perhaps do a lot of good to both the Bhutias and Tibetans on this side and on the other side of the border After all, this was one of the most important gateways of exchange between the great civilisations of India and China for thousands of years. The conflicts in this century can be considered to be an outcome of colonial aberration There is no reason why they cannot be overcome for the betterment of the peoples on both sides as some of the bordering communities like the Bhutias and Tibetans may prefer existing within amorphous political structures rather than being bound by the structures of the nation-states which took shape in the colonial and post-colonial period

To conclude, the Nepalese per se are not the root of the malaise affecting the State of Sikkim They are at best pawns of the vested interests, primarily prodded by the State The State-sponsored development programmes have also resulted in the large inflow of several foreign nationals into other States of North-East India like the Nepalese (in Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, and Assam), Bangladeshi Mulsims (in Assam, Nagaland and Mizoram), and the Burmese in Mizoram. In Sikkim, ironically, even many of the Bhutia-Lepchas who are crying foul today had backed the Nepalese cause at one time so as to dislodge the 'Chogyal' But they certainly did not expect a State annexation which ultimately is rooted to the present crisis ■

Historicity of π, and Reality of Rocks

II : SCIENCE, CULTURAL PRIMACY, AND NAIVE REALISM

C K RAJU

This is the second part of an extended comment on Paulos Mar Gregorios' last article, "Sokal's Hoax and Weinberg's Vanity" (Mainstream *Annual Number 1996, p 101), concerning Weinberg's gloating over Sokal's hoax on post-modernists The first part (published in* Mainstream, *November 29, 1997) extended an invitation to reconstruct ideology by blending it with tradition, and explained Gregorios' perception of the political relevance of metaphysics Against that background, in this part the immediate question of naive realism is being re-examined by the author*

Post-modernity may be out, but does that put naive realism back into the picture? Weinberg[1] represents naive realism physical 'laws' are as real as rocks Society does impinge upon science, but only to decide the questions; for society may decide whether a scientist works on a cure of AIDs or of malaria, but the answers are independent of society A patient either recovers or does not, his body temperature is not something decided by social consent But Weinberg, in his best-selling *The First Three Minutes* goes much further, he gives the distinct impression, like Stephen Hawking, that the Big-Bang theory and quantum gravity only provide an extension of the Biblical creation story in the form officially approved by Western theologians Thus, a particular interpretation of a particular tradition becomes 'true' with the backing of scientific authority This conclusion is of the utmost political significance today to those who seek to establish cultural hegemony, which they regard as a condition accompanying unipolarity

The post-modern opposition to modernity includes an opposition to science that at first seems revolutionary ·

> our technologies have resulted in 50,000 nuclear warheads, our industrial economies have given us ecocide on every continent, our social distribution of goods and services has given us a billion underdeveloped and starving humans Anything less than a fundamental transformation of our situation is hardly worth talking about

How would this revolution be brought about? The quote continues

> And yet, given this demand, my own suggestion is that we tell stories—in particular, that we tell the many stories that comprise the great cosmic story'[2]

The reference is clearly to the cosmic creation story which allowed theologians to rule unchallenged, until 'modern science dealt notorious blows to religions'[3]

A related point of view[4] is social constructivism, like the relevance of tradition, this is the second point on which post-modernity seems to converge with Marxism, making it easy to confuse one for the other The Marxist motivation for social constructivism is clear enough in an

> Oppressive system science and technology become a major instrument of exploitation Science and technology for the benefit of humanity is more likely to grow within a socialist rather than in a market economy or a in a mixed economy like ours in India '[5]

The next step is this reality is a social construct, not merely social reality, but also physical reality Marxists regard science as part of the superstructure, post-modernists maintain[6] that science is a cultural artefact Weinberg has arrived at the conclusions he does not because they are 'true' but because of the tradition to which he belongs

The difficult part is to establish that physical reality is a social construct My own favourite challenge problem was this show me the cultural and social influences in the Schrodinger equation Most people I asked were sure only of the existence of this social influence, though unsure of what it was, or what physics the Schrodinger equation represented, or how exactly it was stated, or how it would change under hypothetical changes (a) from a capitalist to a socialist society, and (b) to another tradition If science is only a story, there should be any number of different ways of telling it but the post-modernist has yet to find a second way to tell the story Some social constructvists seek to drown these difficulties in a barrage of words, this makes others suspect that what we have here is not a dogma but fantasy which is unsupported by even a single example (My own answer, put forward in my forthcoming book, does not avoid these difficulties, but would take too long to explain here)

One source of these difficulties faced by the naive social constructivist is an inability or unwillingness to distinguish between the operational and metaphysical portions of a theory This distinction tends to be fuzzy in the sphere of the social sciences, where the proof of a theory may be in the selling Consider, for instance, the economic theory which asserts that "liberalisation is good for the economy"

This theory becomes operational just as soon as it is accepted (by the government) The success or failure of this theory may be decided by the propaganda which markets the theory, by manipulation of statistical data ("poverty is reduced, the inflation rate is down"), by raising hopes ("wait till next year"), or by suitable excuses which relocate responsibility for failure ("the bureaucrats did not allow liberalisation to be implemented properly") Unlike economic reality, physical reality is not so easy to manipulate Even the smartest mechanic is unlikely to convince his dumbest customer that a car which refuses to start is actually working Lysenko tried and failed This is not to deny that manipulation of even perceptual reality is possible ("milk miracle"), but this can be done neither so easily nor so stably Social consent tends to evaporate when confronted with the reality of the emperor's new clothes, even when this reality is pointed out from a politically insignificant quarter Physical reality is even harder to manipulate than perceptual reality, for it takes into account perceptual illusions like parallax

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LET us, however, examine here the clearer ground of the metaphysical implications of science Gregorios readily conceded the operational significance of science, and objected only to the metaphysical implications that Weinberg seeks to draw Even Popper[7] cheerfully admitted that methphysics is meaningful (A notion of identity, such as "Hindu identity", is a metaphysical matter, but it has political implications) Logic is a part of methphysics Kant privileged logic (Aristotelian) as *a priori* (read God-given). Had Kant bothered to be mildly educated in cultures other than his own, sharing a fraction of Voltaire's enthusiasm, he would have known that distinct traditions had distinct logics Dignaga,[8] for example, accepts at least three cases of "true", "false" and "both"[9], an acceptance which ruined the Kantian antinomies before they were formulated! The Jain Bhadrabahu, in his Syadvada[10] has similar categories, "is", "is not" and "inexpressible" (*avaktavya*) Almost every Western philosopher would accept that induction is uncertain But the cultural dependence of logic means that deduction is just as uncertain What rule should one use to fix logic?

A change of logic would change (a) the notion of proof or valid *pramana* For example, arguments which use *reductio ad absurdum* or the 'law' of the excluded middle would no longer be valid Hence (b) mathematics would change An example, albeit socially unsuccessful, is provided by Brouwer's and Heyting's intuitionism (which rejects *reductio* arguments hence transfinite induction[11]) Another, more successful, example is provided by computer simulation, where the notions of 'proof' and 'number' are profoundly altered Roger Penrose, in his *Emperor's New Mind*, repeatedly returns to the thesis that mathematical theorems are true in some unqualified sense That is, just as Kant privileged logic, and Weinberg privileges physics, Penrose privileges mathematics as culturally independent truth As an example refuting Penrose's argument, one can examine the cultural dependence of geomerty the geometry of the *sulba sutra* is fundamentally different[12] from the geometry of Euclid (though neither revivalists nor post-modernists have yet noticed the difference) Hence, if one were to run into an alien civlisation, there is no guarantee that they would have the same mathematics

The question is whether a change of mathematics would also change (c) physics? One can present examples in both directions Though the *sulba sutra* and Euclid have different conceptions of geometry, they agree (by a logical jump in Euclid) on measuring areas, or constructing a right angle, for practical problems in surveying or building On the other side, a change of logic may be directly connected to a change of physics Quantum probabilities differ from classical probabilities exactly in that they are defined on a logic different from Aristotelian logic In fact, D S Kothari speculated that Bhadrabahu's *syadavada* interpreted as a 3-valued logic may provide a basis for complementarity in quantum mechanics Schrodinger's cat is inexpressibly both alive and dead But Gregorios was right in supposing that nothing 'dramatic' was likely to emerge from these 'heroic efforts'[13] Kothari's paper overlooked a similar (unsuccessful) attempt earlier by Reichenbach, based on Lukasiewicz's 3-valued logic[14]

If logic, mathematics, and physics are all man-made rather than God-given, then they may well change over time And, indeed, though physical theories are as hard to change as rocks, they do change with time There is no guarantee that successive changes will be gradual and will leave unchanged the core of the preceding theory like rocks, physical theories may shatter when they do change In Western thought, *aether* was regarded as the foundation of physical reality from Descartes to the beginning of this century, when it was abandoned us utter fiction One no longer even hears of *phlogiston* which was once an established physical reality So, is there any defence for the "ineluctable historicity of pi and G"? I confess I laughed when I first read this statement But could it be a case of monkeys at the typewriter making sense? (A sense may be there even though no sense was intended!) If we drop the offensive term 'ineluctable' there is a case for the historicity of G and π, and against naive realism as follows

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THERE have been not only varying values of π, but clearly also varying ideas of π down the ages Today we regard π as a number which is not only irrational (a non-ratio of integers) but transcendental (not a solution of any polynomial equation with rational coefficients) Euclid did not admit irrational numbers, as a result of which the proof of his very first theorem went wrong It won't any longer do to call π the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter Is it an actual physical circle that we are talking about or an ideal geometric one? If actual, we would arrive at a rational number, which would not be π, but only an approximation to it, in a certain idealised sense of the term "approximation" If ideal, we would need to explain *which* geometry to use, for it would not do to presume that "Euclidean geometry is natural since it applies to the physical universe" How, then, would one explain π to an alien?

As for G, there is a well-known physical theory—the Dirac cosmology—in which Newton's 'universal' 'constant' G, varies with time[15] Dirac's cosmology has not proved to be very successful, but another theory which has been very successful is the Poincaré-Lorentz special theory of relativity[16] (This theory precedes the general theory of relativity which Weinberg cites in favour of the belief in the universal constancy of π and G) In this theory, the speed of light *in vacuo* was declared a constant as a matter of definition, a definition which admittedly contained some arbitrariness. The rule used to resolve the arbitrariness was convenience and simplicity the equations of physics should be as simple as possible It may, therefore, happen (using arguments similar to those of Poincaré and Dirac) that tomorrow we accept a theory in which it is simpler or more convenient to let the speed of light vary with the epoch In particular, it would be rash to suppose that Weinberg's account of the creation of the cosmos, even granting the validity of the suspect physics he uses, is the final one, or even that it is a close approximation to the truth

The intended point is not to defend or interpret Sokal's meaningless statements, but only to refute also Penrose's 'naive' idea of an unqualifiedly true mathematics,[17] and the underlying systematic, political claim of Western cultural primacy (Recall, from the first part of this article, that the first sentence of our Constitution enshrines this claim, with undersirable consequences) This claim is dangerous in today's world where initiatives are on to try and create a unipolar world resembling Toynbee's vision of a Western universal state Theology always has a hold over the "liberal arts", trying to re-enchant the world through post-modernism being only the latest manifestation Now theology is trying to re-possess science, by using naive-realistic implications from science to give authority to metaphysical claims of theological interest Our intelligentsia has yet to wake up to this remarriage of sciences and religion in the West, they continue talking of scientific temper in the firm belief that the relations between science and religion will remain frozen in time everywhere the way they existed in Western Europe at the time of Marx Gregorios' answer was to attack not science but the naive realism which linked speculative scientific theories to metaphysical political claims

To summarise, *Weinberg's naive realism and post-modernism are opposite sides of the same political coin* While reidiculing post-modernism, Weinberg is exactly following the post-modernist recommen-dations[16] to tell cosmic creation stories, creating the desired political effect We can see this political coin circulating also in our immediate political context The revivalist appeals to tradition in order to rule by linking religion to state locally The local revivalist too seeks (a) to revise history and (b) to legitimise religion by claiming its harmony with science The present appeal to tradition goes in the other direction of seeking to delink religion and state globally, hence also the post-colonial attempts to copy this link locally ■

(Concluded)

FOOTNOTES

1 Steven Weinber, "Sokal's Hoax", *New York Review of Books* August 8, 1966, p 11ff

2 Brian Swimme, 'The Cosmic Creation Story' In David Ray Griffin (ed), *The Reenchantment of Science Post-modern Proposals*, SUNY Press, New York, 1988, p 47

3 Frederick Ferre, 'Religious World Modelling and Post-modern Science' In David Ray Griffin (ed), cited above, p 87

4 Social constructivism is not the only alternative Gregorios considers The term 'vanity' in the title of Gregorios' article is an allusion to Sankara's opposition to naive realism summarised in the formula *Brahma satyam, jagad mithya jivabrahmaiva napara* [the Absolute alone has true being, the universe is unreal, and the human soul is none other than the Absolute], *mithya* literally means vanity See, Paulos Mar Gregorios, *A Light too Bright The Enlightenment Today*, SUNY, New York, pp 149-50

5 Paulos Mar Gregorios, *Science for Sane Societies*, CLS, Madras 1980, pp 135-136

6 For example, Willias W Harmann, 'The Post-modern Heresy Consciousness as Causal ' In David Ray Griffin

(ed), cited above, p 121

7 K R Popper, " I have not only stressed the meaningfulness of metaphysical assertions and the fact that I am myself a metaphysical realist, but I have also analysed the important historical role played by metaphysics in the formation of scientific theories " *The Myth of the Framework in defence of science and rationality,* (ed) M Notturno, Routledge, London, 1994, p 75

8 See, however, R.S Y Chi, *Buddhist Formal Logic A Study of Dignaga's Hetucakra and K'uei-chi's Great Commentary on the Nyayapravesa,* reprint, Motilal Banarasidas, Delhi, 1984

9 In the Brahmajâla Sutta, listing what his teaching is not, the Buddha's description of examples of similar categories are the following (a) the world is finite, (b) the worlds is infinite, and (c) the world is both finite and infinite, for it is finite up and down and infinite across *Digha Nikaya,* (tr) Maurice Walshe, cited earlier, pp 78-79

10 S C Vidyabhushan, *History of Indian Logic,* reprint, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1971, pp 164-67

11 There are various 'equivalent' principles of transfinite induction (deduction) known by the names Axiom of Choice, Zorn's lemma, Well-Ordering Principle, etc , and stronger statements such as Cantor's Continuum Hypothesis

12 C K Raju, "Time in Indian and Western Traditions, and Time in Physics", in D P Chattopadhyaya and Ravinder Kumar (eds), *Mathematics, Astronomy and Biology in Indian Tradition,* PHISPC and ICPR, New Delhi, 1995

13 *Science for Sane Societies,* cited earlier, p 125

14 For more details on Schrodinger's Cat, Lukasiewicz's 3-valued logic, quantum logics, and for a new physics, see C K Raju, *Time Towards a Consistent Theory,* Kluwer Academic, Dordrecht, 1994

15 The theory was formulated by the great physicist P A M Dirac It is based on what are called the large number coincidences The various (dimensioned) 'constants' of physics combine together to give pure (dimensionless) numbers which are very large (typically of the order of 1E42 1 followed by 42 zeros) For example, the ratio of gravitational to electromagnetic forces between a proton and an electron is of this order, as is the (Hubble) 'radius' of the cosmos divided by the (classical) 'radius' of the elctron Dirac thought that these coincidences indicated a deep connection, and these large numbers must remain constant, so that the gravitational 'constant' varied with the epoch

16 Usually attributed to Einstein who later restated it, using some of Poincar's and Lorentz's terms for it, though he claimed he had not seen their relevant papers, published earlier, but that is another story

17 At our last meeting, Gregorios mentioned that he had not quite made up his mind about Penrose, so some extension of Gregorios' ideas is involved here

18 See Brian Swimme, 'The Cosmic Creation Story' In *The Reenchantment of Science Post-modern Proposals,*cited in note2

BLUE PENCIL

Jain Commission and 'Journalistic Coup'

G S BHARGAVA

Neerja Chowdhury's is a well-earned 'scoop' in *The Indian Express* about the personnel of the Prasar Bharati Board She got the tip from the Prime Minister's conversation with Urdu editors two days earlier After exhausting the routine questions about the political situation and the fall-out of the Jain Commission's interim report, the journalists had the prescience to broach the topic of autonomy for the government media

Pursuing the story, she got confirmation that Dr VS Pai Panandiker, Director of the Centre for Policy Research, was the President's nominee for the Prasar Bharati Selection Board Dr Pai Panandiker was cagey to confirm it but he would not deny it Tapping other sources with painstaking diligence, Mrs Chowdhury landed the story twentyfour hours before it became official Good work

The report also realistically analyses the situation in the light of the persisting uncertainty about the survival of the Gujral Government If Parliament fails to ratify the Presidential ordinance amending the Prasar Bharati Act of 1990, the law in its original form will remain in force If the Lok Sabha is dissolved, meanwhile, the 22-member parliamentary committee to oversee the functioning of the Prasar Bharati Corporation cannot be constituted So, technically, the Board is free of the albatross until sometime next year The other amendments reinforcing financial autonomy of the Corporation will also be in abeyance and the Board has to learn to live with it Hopefully, the stature of the Chairman and Members of the Board will keep in check the bureaucrats in the establishment

Incidentally, autonomy for the government-owned electronic media is no longer a contentious issue as it was when Lal Krishna Advani as the Information and Broadcasting Minister in 1978 established the Verghese Committee to go into the matter With the lapse of the 1979 legislation also ended the controversy about the misuse of the government media—actually only Akashvani—during the Emergency and the need for an institutional prophylactic against its repetition With the result that even Rajiv Gandhi, despite his oft-repeated aversion for letting go of the government stranglehold on Doordarshan and Akashvani, had been prevailed upon to go alongwith P Upendra's version of the law in 1990 A more radical one like that mooted by Jaipal Reddy now would have been anathema to the majority Congress party then Now, as the Board starts functioning, dispelling the apprehensions of the conservatives and bringing the radicals round, hopefully there will be a consensus among the parties by the time the next Lok

Sabha is in place That is how legislative compromises are fashioned in mature democracies and not by disrupting proceedings of the Legislature to impose one's will on the House

◆

TALKING of the interim report of the Jain Commission, it is an open secret among Delhi press corps how it has been leaked out Vinod Mehta in his *Outlook* called Justice M C Jain a municipal tap in that respect According to him, the periodical leaks of the document are geared to ensure extension of the Commission's term which is now in its sixth year Mehta's guess is it will see the birth of the next millennium He also claims his publication had the document two months earlier but did not publish it before it was basically old hat So did a few other Delhi publications, including daily newspapers, have access to the 'scoop' Some of them started recycling them only after the excerpts in the *India Today* touched off a political crisis In that sense it is the timing of the leak and not its contents which has been crucial Who determined it?

That the issue of the journal which carried the explosive quotes also had a photograph of Justice Jain with Prabhu Chawla, the author of the 'journalistic coup', lends a somewhat sinister political colour to the episode True, one cannot fault a journalist for having won the confidence of his or her source for blowing the whistle More importantly, was Chawla aware of the political purpose of the leak—which now sticks out a mile—and was he a party to it even unwittingly? Incidentally, the political purpose of the leak is now so well established that a report in *The Week* traces it to the BJP! What the BJP hoped to gain from the leak is difficult to fathom Its efforts to embarrass the government and put the Congress on the defensive are understandable but not the theory that it baited the trap for the Congress to walk into If that were the case, it would have been easier for the Congress President to wriggle out of the predicament in which he has landed himself and his party

Interestingly, public opinion as reflected by newspaper writings and correspondence columns is unanimous that the Congress has not only goofed the issue but that its threat to the United Front Government was in bad faith As the party sustaining a minority government, it has every right to call it a day as Sitaram Kesri did last April when he pulled down the Deve Gowda Government Secondly, the party is justified in hoping to improve its position at the hustings and opt for a fresh election on whatever calculations But when such a decision is taken it should have the guts to see it through, which is not the case now

I have yet to come across a political commentary or editorial in a daily publication or a periodical which has not roundly attacked the Congress Some writers like M D Nalapat, Political Editor of *The Times of India*, have gone to the extent of saying that the Congress has, in the process, made itself a political untouchable, *a la* the BJP sometime ago, in the wake of the Ayodhya outrage He also rightly warns the BJP that if it lets its ragtag army like the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal set the agenda for the *'parivar'* it will be back in the doghouse Overall, the quality of comment and the depth of analysis of the pieces are tops

◆

MEANWHILE, Chanchal Sarkar in his *Hindustan Times* column has taken the local newspapers to task for not nailing down, with sufficient drive, the waywardness of private bus operators It is a topic on which public opinion does not need to be moulded The average Delhiwallah is disgusted with the private buses and thier flair to kill and maim people at will Some newspapers in the past had a daily catalogue of the victims of rash driving by the so-called blueline buses but to no effect Now there are daily pictures in the newspapers of stranded schoolchildren pressing into service any and every means of transport to reach their schools *The Statesman* showed a cluster of little boys huddled in a cycle rickshaw on their way to school The caption tellingly called it 'capital punishment'

As for the private buses, they are a law unto themselves It is common for an offending bus driver to flee the scene after running down a pedestrian or cyclist It does not happen in Calcutta or Chennai The public will hold him prisoner and hand him over to the police In Delhi, nothing of the kind happens When the Supreme Court laid down that school buses should be driven by persons with a minimum of ten years's experience and without proven charges of rash or negligent driving, it has been found that there are not enough such drivers That is the state of affairs in a city with the largest number of private vehicles on the roads It also speaks of the commitment to road safety of the motor licensing authority

◆

FINALLY, the President's visit to Srinagar for the convocation of the Kashmir University was news not only because it was the first visit there of the head of state after the outbreak of insurgency eight years ago but also because it had been undertaken in the teeth of protests by the Hurriyat Conference and other secessionists They wanted the convocation to be boycotted by the students, which did not happen They had given a call for bandh in the city, which ignored it More than the President's convocation address, these sidelights are important But agencies like the UNI ignored it On the other hand, Sumit Chakravartty, editor of *Mainstream*, who accompanied the President on the trip, made it a point to highlight it in a separate news piece Unusual, but necessary ■

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS (NOVEMBER 23-29, 1997)

NATIONAL

November 23

- United Front Core Committee reiterates its rejection of the Congress demand to drop the DMK Ministers from the government The Congress, however, decides to wait till 9 30 AM on November 24 for the UF to communicate its decision formally
- Chief Election Commissioner Dr M S Gill says the Commission will put its election machinery into top gear and look for a suitable time to hold elections within the stipulated six months if the Lok Sabha is dissolved
- Lok Sabha Speaker P A Sangma says at Jaipur that "a national government would possibly be an answer to tide over the fluid situation prevailing in the country" as no party wants elections and fresh elections were likely to produce a hung parliament He adds for good measure "if the country opts for the national government then the political parties should not think of having elections for the next 10 years"
- Eminent Indian writer Nirad C Chaudhuri celebrates his 100th birthday at Oxford (UK)
- Veteran journalist Nikhil Chakravartty is appointed Chairman of the Prasar Bharati Board Journalist B G Verghese, historian Romila Thapar, former Indian Ambassador to US Abid Hussain, scientist U R Rao, Hindi writer Rajendra Yadav and former Tamil Nadu Chief Secretary A Padmanabhan comprise the newly constituted Board with former I & B Secretary S S Gill as its Member-Secretary

November 24

- Congress President Sitaram Kesri tells his party MPs to stall the proceedings of the Lok Sabha as the government had not responded to the letter sent by the party to Prime Minister I K Gujral The Lok Sabha Speaker adjourns the House sine die and calls the Congress MPs' action as "a mindless mockery" and "appalling denigration of the institution of Parliament"
- Some 45 first-time Lok Sabha MPs meet President K,R Narayanan and implore him not to dissolve the Lok Sabha
- Defence Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav announces a revision in the pay scales of armed forces personnel below officer rank which will benefit 10 lakh personnel and cost more than Rs 500 crores every year to the exchequer
- Indian rupee crashes to Rs 38 50 for a US dollar recording a fall of 70 paise before the RBI pumps $ 400 million into the forward trading, which brings it up a little

November 25

- West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu, speaking on a motion in the State Assembly, says the Congressmen were more busy fighting among themselves than combating the BJP
- BJP asks President K R Narayanan not to dissolve Lok Sabha in haste but at the same time directs its MPs to prepare for the mid-term poll

November 26

- In response to Prime Minister I K Gujral's letter to Congress President saying that the DMK cannot be dropped from the government, Sitaram Kesri demands again that the DMK "should be dropped immediately" The UF Core Committee unanimously decides that there was no question of going back on its decision and dropping the DMK TMC leader G K Moopanar says he is still hopeful of some sort of patch-up with the Congress
- Dr A P J Abdul Kalam, the architect of India's missile programme, Scientific Adviser to the Defence Ministry, is awarded the highest civilian title Bharat Ratna for his immense contribution to scientific research and modernisation of defence technology
- Additional Solicitor General T Andhyarujina informs the Delhi High Court that the government absolved Sitaram Kesri of any irregularities in the Rs 3 75 crore Foreign Contribution Regulation Act case as 51 per cent shareholders of the donor companies in question were NRIs, hence the money was not foreign contribution
- Environmentalist Sundarlal Bahuguna decides to call off his 56-day fast after a government order to stop work at the Tehri Dam site till his next meeting with the Prime Minister

November 27

- Replying to the letter of the Congress President, the United Front makes it clear once again that it has no intention of dropping the DMK from the government
- RSS supremo Prof Rajendra Singh asks UP Chief Minister Kalyan Singh to repair the damage that has been done to the party by engineering defections and awarding the defectors with Ministries Kalyan Singh is asked to ensure better than average performance by the new Ministers
- West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu reiterates in the Assembly that four Left Front MLAs were bribed by Congress leader Pranab Mukherjee during his election to the Rajya Sabha in 1993
- Prime Minister Gujral, inaugurating a seminar on "Gender Equality through Transformative Politics", assures that the Women's Reservation Bill will survive the UF Government

November 28

- Congress President Sitaram Kesri withdraws support from the eight-month old UF Government headed by I K Gujral and stakes his claim to form a government Within an hour, Prime Minister Gujral submits the resignation of his Council of Ministers The President accepts the resignation and asks the PM to continue in office till alternate arrangements are made
- United Front convener N Chandrababu Naidu hands over letters from all the UF constituents to the President stating that they would not support any Congress or BJP bid to form a government
- ULFA strikes at oil installations by blowing up an automated trunk pipeline at three places leading to spillage of crude hitting supplies to Guwahati and Bongaigaon refineries in Assam and to Barauni refinery in Bihar

November 29
- Waiting and hoping for a split in the UF, while the BJP keeps its fingers crossed for a split in the Congress, Sitaram Kesri tells newspersons "I have made history, whatever people may say, I have made history"
- CPI-M Polit-Bureau, in a statement, says "After the Congress' irresponsible act of bringing down the Gujral Government, there is no other option but to go in for elections" CPI Secretary Atul Kumar Anjan endorses the call and tells reporters that the President must dissolve the Lok Sabha to save the country from horse trading

INTERNATIONAL

November 23
- US President Bill Clinton rejects Russian President Boris Yeltsin's appeal to speed up the process of easing international sanctions against Iraq
- Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak accuses Britain of protecting terrorists who collect funds and plan attacks He rules out any dialogue with the Islamist militants
- Four foreign defence groups channelled thousands of pounds to the Labour Party of Britain through a lobbying organisation headed by Prime Minister Tony Blair's close friend, reports the *Sunday Times* (London)
- Sri Lanka Air force planes destroy a Tamil Tiger rebel base detected by a spy plane, located north of the LTTE held town of Mankulam
- Awami National Party of Pakistan demands that the NWFP province be renamed Pakhtoon-Khwa
- Hundreds of Bangladesh insurgents start handing over arms to their tribal leaders in preparation for a peace pact with the government

November 24
- *Washington Times* reports that United States tracked a Russian nuclear-powered attack submarine as it manoeuvred in international waters near US aircraft carriers off the coast of Washington State in September
- British Muslims launch a new organisation, the Muslim Council of Britain, at a convention in London, attended by delegates from more than 200 organisations, to give a "coordinated voice to Muslims" within the British society
- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sacks his chief-of-staff Avigdor Lieberman to defuse a revolt by senior members of his ruling Likud Party who called the latter "Rasputin"
- Pakistan's Interior Minister Shujaat Hussain says his country inherited the "scourge of terrorism" from neighbouring Afghanistan and vows to wipe it out
- Leaders of the 18-member Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum, assembled at Vancouver (Canada) for their annual summit express their concern at the financial crisis facing South Asian Tigers

November 25
- Addressing a seminar on the US Policy towards South Asia at the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars (Washington), former Democratic Congressman Stephen J Solarz asks the US to declare the State of Jammu and Kashmir as an "integral part of India and that it will remain so" It would help Pakistan, he says, come out of the illusion that it could take Kashmir
- Pakistan Government hands over Rs 5 crores to the Muttaheda Qaumi Movement (MQM) in Karachi to be paid as compensation for families of *mohajirs* (migrants) killed during Benazir Bhutto regime
- Space walking astronauts of the US space shuttle Columbia capture the slowly spinning satellite "Spartan", which had gone out of control, and anchor it to the cargo bay of the shuttle

November 26
- Two judges of the Quetta bench of the Pakistani Supreme court suspend Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah declaring that proper procedure was not followed in his appointment The Chief Justice terms the ruling "unlawful"
- Pentagon report—"Proliferation Threat and Response"—released in Washington lists India and Pakistan among 25 nations whose nuclear, biological and chemical weapons programmes may pose a threat to the UN
- Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff Gen Jehangir Karamat declares that the armed forces have no desire to fish in troubled waters and to capture power once again
- Iraq says it would not put up with any more "farce" by the UN arms inspectors, whom it accused again of spying for the United States

November 27
- A five-judge bench of the Supreme Court of Pakistan in its 4 to 1 majority judgement annuls the ruling of its Quetta bench suspending the Chief Justice and reinstates Justice Sajjad Ali Shah
- President Saddam Hussain says he will allow the UN weapons inspection team to visit the palaces and other off-limits sites for a period of one week or more so as to find out the truth
- Labour Government of Britain moves to honour one of its key election pledges to implement minimum wages throughout the British industry The per hour rate will be fixed after a report on law pay comes out in May next

November 28
- Supreme Court of Pakistan is forced to abruptly adjourn hearing in the contempt of court case against Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif after hundreds of the latter's supporters barge into the court demanding Chief Justice Sajjad Ali Shah's resignation
- Japanese oil broker Junichi Izui, charged with bribery and tax evasion, testifies in Parliament that Foreign Minister Keizo Obuchi and two key ruling party members were among recipients of money he contributed in a case that led to the charges of influence-peddling
- Russian President Boris Yeltsin demands from the Ministers to improve Russia's economic plight and threatens to make more changes in his government

November 29
- UN Secretary General Kofi Annan fails to recommend to the Security Council any increase in an oil-for food deal with Iraq Diplomats say that Washington has backed down from its earlier willingness to increase the amount of oil to be exported by Iraq in order to purchase badly needed food and medicine
- Paksitan Government bans demonstrations outside the Supreme Court building ■

Posted at CPSO in New Delhi on December 5/6, 1997 Delhi Postal REGD No DL-11037/97
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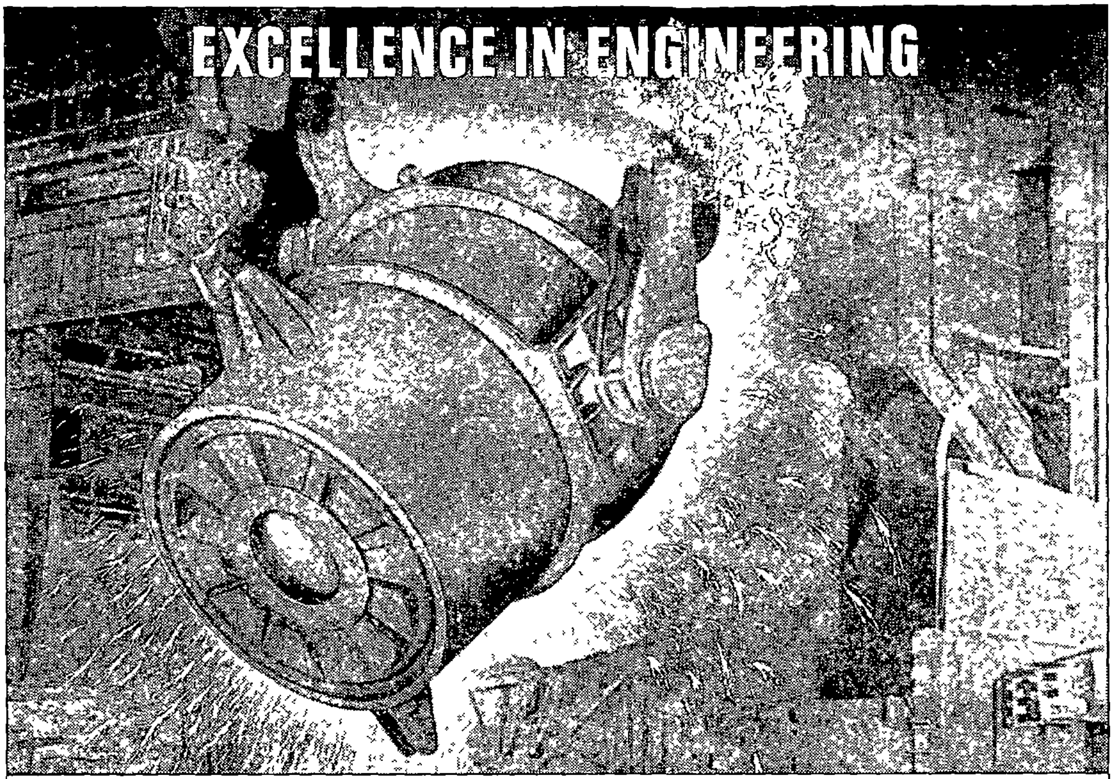

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Edited and published by Sumit Chakravartty *for* PERSPECTIVE PUBLICATIONS PRIVATE LTD , 145/1D, Shahpur Jat (First Floor), (Near Asiad Village), New Delhi-110049 *Printed at* NEW DELHI PRINTERS, 20/7 Old Market,West Patel Nagar, New Delhi-110008 *Editor* Sumit Chakravartty *Editorial Adviser* Nikhil Chakravartty *Manager* Jasjit Kay Nagra

December 20,1997 Rs 25

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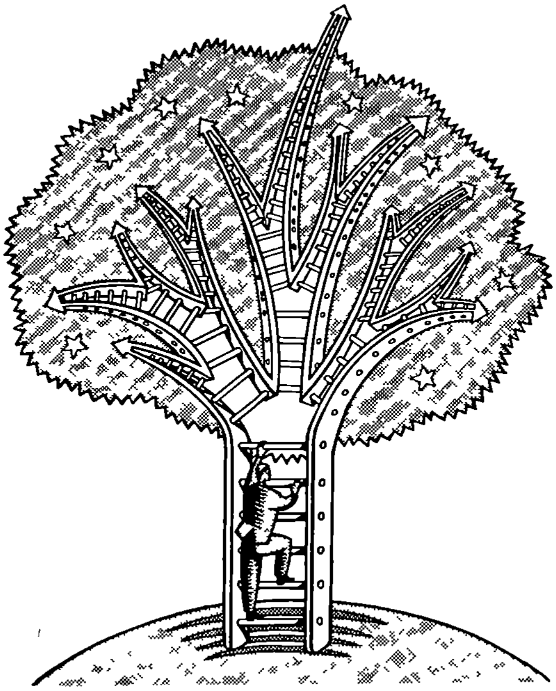

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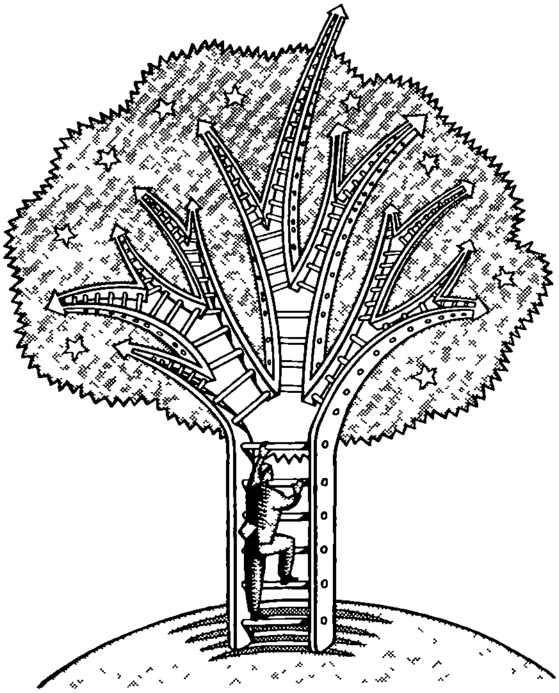

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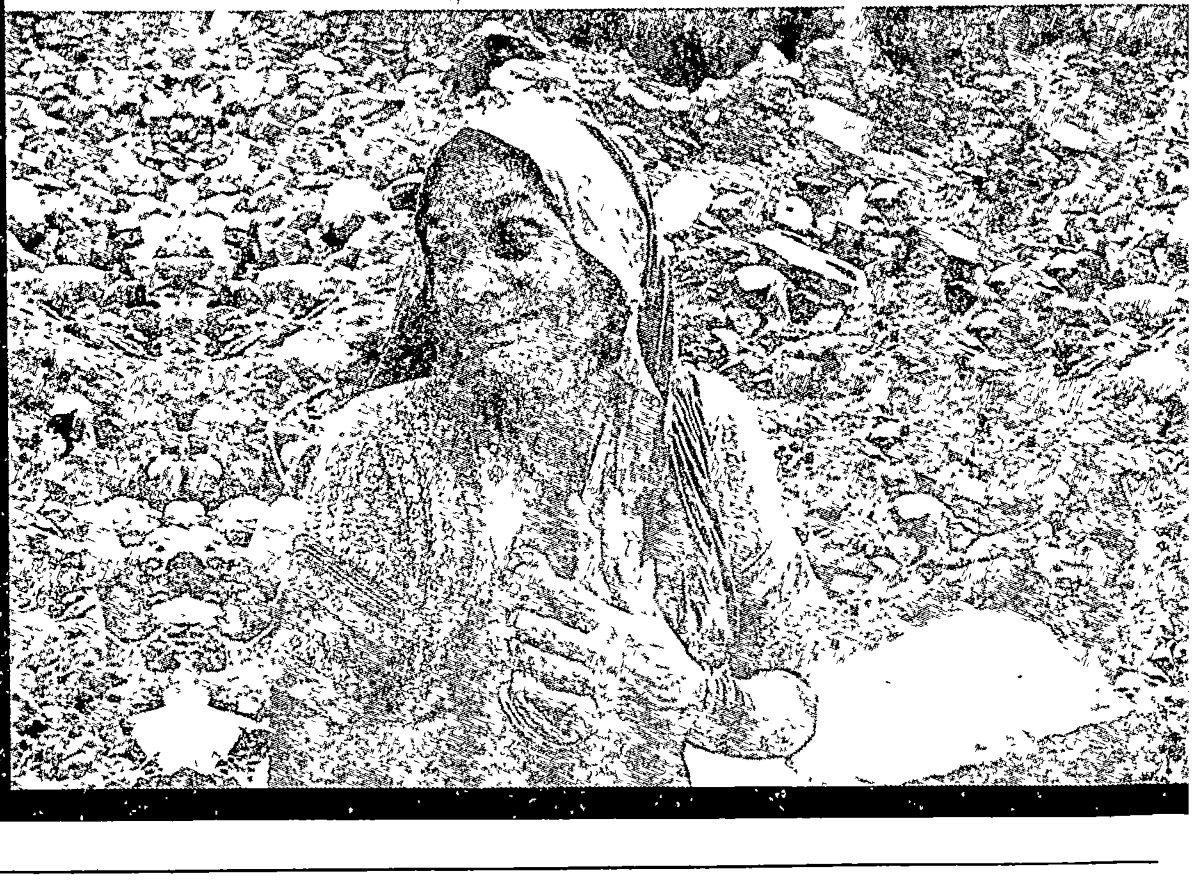

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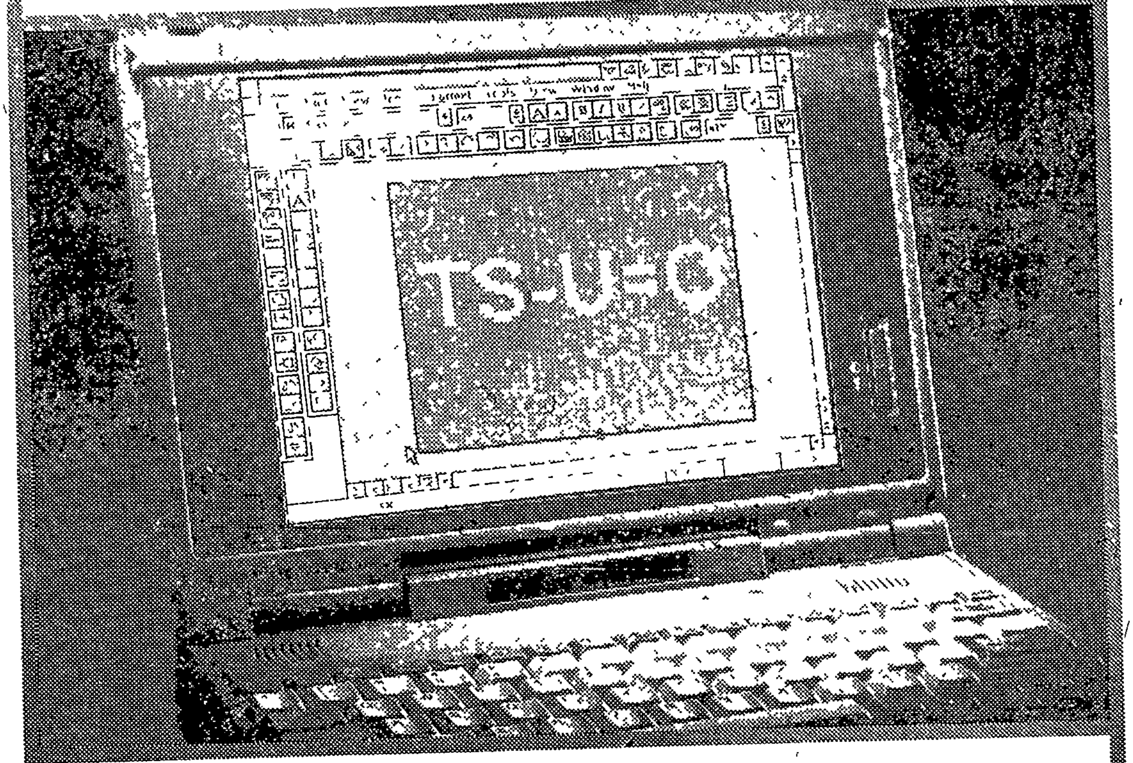

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Readers, Please Note...

This Annual Number being more than thrice the size of an ordinary number, the next issue of **Mainstream** will appear on January 24, 1998 as the Republic Day Special.

—Editor

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Cover poem Faiz Ahmed Faiz's "This Harvest of Hopes", translated by VG Kiernan, is taken from his book *Poems* (published by People's Publishing House, New Delhi

Reaffirming the Commitment

As *Mainstream* completes thirtyfive years of its modest existence, the national scenario presents a bizarre spectacle

The phrase 'criminalisation of the polity' has turned into a cliché as we have become desensitised to the magnitude of criminalisation in the corridors of power Corruption in high places has barely been affected by the spirited judicial intervention especially now when a new phase has begun with many of the big fishes caught in the web of specific charges getting scot free due to a variety of factors intertwined with legal wranglings In the absence of exemplary sentence having been meted out to any of the bigwigs forced to stand trial there is no reduction in the scale of such practices which continue unabated Those subjected to maximum social persecution for centuries have no doubt of late acquired a sense of confidence in themselves, the emergence of the BSP as a national force providing enough proof of that phenomenon regardless of the opportunistic acrobatics of its leaders, and yet the recurrence of carnages as in Bathani Tola and Jehanabad is a poignant and grim reminder of the miles that have to be traversed before the dispossessed in the lowest rungs of the socio-economic ladder are able to lead a life of dignity and self-respect

On the political front the country is being compelled to undertake the costly exercise of yet another parliamentary poll—the second one in two years—thanks to the thoughtless act of its premier political organisation that brought about the downfall of the United Front Government without caring to comprehend the implications of such a step The organisational structure of the party is in a shambles, the pathetic appeals from the Congress stalwarts to Sonia Gandhi exhorting her to assume the party leadership providing ample testimony to its allround degeneration This evokes a legitimate query as to whether the organisation, having reached such a pass, should not be given a decent burial as a national entity

As for the constituents of the ruling conglomerate, the Rashtriya Janata Dal headed by the redoubtable Laloo Prasad Yadav has once again shot into prominence following the Bihar strongman's release from detention and reprieve from cases of mega-corruption Besides offering good certificates to his wife for her 'performance' as the State CM during his absence, among the first pronouncements he makes on appearing in public is that Bihar and he would decide as to who the next PM would be! And with that purpose in mind he has straightaway plunged into negotiations to form a new alliance in league with the Congress

The United Front is not bereft of personalities who can match Laloo with his antics and histrionics The person who preceded Inder Gujral as the PM, Deve Gowda, was as much myopic in his vision as the Bihar strongman with the sole exception that he does not enjoy Laloo's clout in his own home State, Karnataka But it is the Samajwadi leader, Defence Minister Mulayam Singh Yadav, who with all his tall talk of defending secularism *a la* Laloo style has emerged as the UP counterpart of the erstwhile head of the Bihar Government in every respect

◆

THE self-proclaimed 'party with a difference', the BJP, is at the moment drawing maximum benefit from the UF-Congress bickerings that led to the collapse of the UF regime But how much of that benefit it can translate into electoral dividend is still unclear Because to do so it will have to live down its unsavoury past, exemplified by its complicity in both the Babri Masjid demolition as well as the spate of communal riots across the country that followed that savage assault on our secular ethos and culture which in conjunction with democracy constitute the very foundation of Indian nationalism Such a move on the part of the BJP is next to impossible despite its Prime Ministerial candidate Atal Behari Vajpayee's superhuman efforts to promote the BJP's acceptability before liberal elements not particularly impressed by the party's emphasis on its 'Hindu' identity that at the rank-and-file level frequently takes anti-Muslim overtones But this apart, the UP drama enacted by Kalyan Singh, coming close on the heels of the Gujarat episode, is the most eloquent proof that the so-called 'party with a difference' can at the opportune moment stoop to any level for the sake of capturing power Thereby it has substantively lost its 'distinct' character and people have now started believing that when in office the BJP would behave precisely as all the other outfits—and in particular the Congress—in power What is more, its communal trade-mark remains intact while the 'militaristic Hinduism' espoused by its mentor, the RSS, continues to impart a pseudo-fascistic dimension to its political credo So when BJP supremo L K Advani thunders that the BJP will lead the nation into the next century, one shudders to contemplate the variant of 'nationalism' India would adopt under a BJP dispensation at the Centre discarding the one based on secular democracy which, notwithstanding all its infirmities, did mould nationalist thinking on positive lines throughout the fifty years of our freedom from alien rule

The United Front Government at the Centre was afflicted with a chronic disability from its inception—its dependence on Congress support If the Congress had allowed the Front rule to continue and the Gujral dispensation to complete its tenure without hindrance that would have provided concrete evidence of the Congress' capacity to reconcile to the inevitability of coalition politics But the shortsighted Congress leaders once again revealed their inability to accept the ground reality and instead sought the short-cut to power courtesy Sonia Gandhi that is bound to shortly boomerang on them with deadly effect At the same time not a few in the UF were itching for a confrontation with the Congress There is also no gainsaying that the innate anti-Congressism of some of the UF partners came in the way of inviting the Congress into the Gujral Ministry through a programmatic understanding, a step which could have not only enhanced the Union Government's longevity but, more importantly, set a precedence for the future As a result the main reason behind the UF-Congress arrangement—defence of secular democracy—was completely lost sight of As a matter of fact that arrangement had to be sacrificed at the altar of petty, selfish interests These were obviously more pronounced in the case of the Congress which found the sweeping observations made in the interim report of the commission inquiring into the conspiracy behind Rajiv Gandhi's assassination sufficiently handy to build up the specious pretext of withdrawing support to the Front without any idea of what its next move would be

In the realm of the economy the last one year has not witnessed any let up in the economic reforms initiated since mid-1991 in the name of abolishing the 'license permit raj' What is actually being sought to be done is not just the removal of excessive controls and undue interferences which is definitely desirable, but in essence the dismantling of the entire edifice of the Nehruvian mixed economy that over the years justifiably gave primacy to the public sector At the same time another Nehruvian goal—growth with social justice—is being attempted to be jettisoned The UF Government could have at least tried to place the reforms on the firm bedrock of Nehruvian principles instead of discarding the latter under the directive of the World Bank and IMF (unmistakably signifying the curtailment of our national sovereignty) But with a person of Chidambaram's outlook in charge of the Finance Ministry the Front could not do much in that regard despite the presence of the CPI in the Union Cabinet and the CPM extending constructive support to the government from outside Of course, the UF's economic agenda, as spelt out in its Common Minimum Programme, was not entirely bereft of its social content and some pernicious moves of the 'globalisers' ensconced in the Finance Ministry were thwarted through timely intervention by the CPI and CPM But on the whole the policies remained on the LPG (liberalisation-privatisation-globalisation) track Dr Manmohan Singh had unveiled under Narasimha Rao One would not have to wait for long for the negative consequence of this development revealing itself with all its serious impact Meanwhile the burgeoning disparities between the limited number of the *nouveau riche* and the vast army of the deprived would continue to widen the gulf between the professed aims of our Constitution and the prevailing state of affairs mirroring the naked truth

The international scenario too does not offer much solace The US' sway the world over remains unchallenged permitting it to act as the global supercop everywhere China's emergence as a new economic giant is certainly a new phenomenon which even Washington cannot overlook But the Chinese remain as much an enigma to the world as the uncertainty hovering over their own future in the domestic sphere With the economic slidedown of Russia showing no signs of improvement there is literally no countervailing force on the global plane to stall the US' irresistible advance towards formalising its unipolar hegemony to the detriment of the interests of the developing world in particular as recent negotiations in the world economic fora have conclusively established beyond doubt True, the latest US overtures towards India vis-a-vis Kashmir are welcome, but viewed in the context of the Pentagon's designs in our region—Pakistan, Afghanistan, Gulf—there is definite cause for anxiety If Washington's past practice is any indicator, only the gullible would believe that the sole surviving superpower would be accommodative on issues relating to our basic interests in the world economic scene as well as vital matters impinging on our security as, for example, the nuclear question

Is there then no ray of hope for us? The present situation definitely breeds pessimism and, what is more, cynicism One should not forget that feeding on public cynicism dictatorship and authoritarianism had made backdoor entries in many a country, not in the Germany of the thirties alone But while not being oblivious of the danger on this score one does notice a ray of sunlight in the midst of the allpervading gloom Of course, autonomy for the official electronic media under UF rule was quite a noteworthy step, but one is not referring to that The UF regime's one remarkable achievement was its ability to protect the Front's unity (unlike the Janata Party in 1979 and the National Front in 1990) wherein the Federal Front of regional parties played a crucial role It is this Federal Front which forms the core of the UF today and together with the Left lends it genuine vitality In fact strengthening of federalism has been the most durable success of the shortlived UF experiment This is not well understood The frequent meetings of the Inter-State Council, presided over by the country's first Communist Home Minister, helped to lay the solid groundwork for refashioning Centre-State relations which was best illustrated by the eventual outcome of the UP crisis For all the limitations of the Left and its allies constituting the Federal Front (and these should not be overlooked under any alibi), it is they who can provide real stability to the country This is the stability based on transparency on one side and the readiness to meet the regional aspirations of all sections of our federal polity on the other—a stability not bearing the stamp of coercive centralisation but a stability ensured through voluntary decentralisation What is most important, this stability is the outcome of the coalition culture the country is now being forced to gradually understand and assimilate, not the superficial stability imposed through one-party governance

◆

AT a time when India faces manifold challenges in the national political and economic spheres as also the international arena—and the human dimension of the problems of Kashmir and the North-East can barely be ignored—it is projection of the goal of this stability which can best meet these challenges and effectively thwart attempts at destabilising the nation Not the phoney stability being advertised by the Congress on the one side and the BJP on the other, it is the stability offered by the Federal Front and the Left within the UF that has the potentiality to help India survive as a nation the onslaught of vested interests, both indigenous and foreign, and at the same time unfold the possibility of the long overdue socio-economic transformation (as in land relations because of which such ghastly tragedies like the Jehenabad massacre can be perpetrated even after fifty years of independence) by charting out a course substantively different from the Fund-Bank sponsored LPG This will not be the stability of the status quo but the stability of preserving the secular democratic edifice of our nationalism based on the values of the freedom struggle and simultaneously transforming and renewing India in the spirit of the same struggle It is this stability which can enable us to stand up—on our own—to foreign pressures trying to deflect us from our chosen path, while building bridges of understanding with friends across the globe, it is this stability which can contribute towards forging closer ties with all our neighbours—including and most notably Pakistan—so as to rebuild South Asia as a region of peace, security and cooperation based on trust and goodwill leaving behind for good the sordid past of suspicion, mistrust and hostility, and it is this stability which can pave the way for the adoption of bold measures to resolve with our neighbours outstanding bilateral disputes crying for solution without depending on any "benign" outside assistance invariably tied to neo-colonial strings

There are numerous landmines to be negotiated before such a stability can be ushered in and even those who can bring it about are themselves not much aware of their own strength and capacity Nevertheless, the very prospect of such a stability is sufficient to serve as a source of abiding inspiration as dark clouds of despondency hover over the horizon That is why, in spite of all the adversities it is presently encountering, *Mainstream* once again commits itself to mobilise, to the best of its ability and notwithstanding the limited resources at its command, public opinion for the success of the national endeavour for our country's regeneration Without restricting its vision to the narrow confines of electoral politics it promises (away from both the glare of publicity and the power of the moneybags) to extend as before full support to all efforts—at the grassroot, local, district, State and national levels—aimed at realising the India of our dreams, an India of 900 million bereft of want, deprivation, joblessness and oppression marching along the road to progress and prosperity and drawing sustenance from the sacrifices of the countless martyrs who had laid down their precious lives in the battle for this country's emancipation from foreign yoke Let the memorable words of the immortal Faiz Ahmed Faiz—whose legacy all of us in this subcontinent have to carry forward—lift our spirits and guide us in our struggles ahead

Comrade, night's dark last moments cannot cheat us,
We shall see yet the flame they have choked down,
The star that is to flash from morning's crown

December 15 S C

राष्ट्रपति
भारत गणतंत्र
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REPUBLIC OF INDIA

MESSAGE

As 'Mainstream' completes thirty-five years of existence, it brings to mind the India of the Nehru years. It invokes the ideals and idealism of an age when the nation had a high-minded and sensitive leader of world stature at its helm; scientists and economists of international renown at its service; and when politics had less to do with power than with beliefs. That was an age when Nehru could differ from a Bhupesh Gupta or a Jayaprakash Narayan but not lose their affection; when he could plan for higher education and not be regarded as elitist; when he could work for 'a just social order' and not be termed 'populist' That was an age where the message went across the length and breadth of our country that the Hindu and the Muslim, as indeed the so-called 'civilised' and the so-called 'tribal' were all interwoven strands and that no one had the right to untwist the yarn. That was the age, too, when the values of non-alignment as a tenet of independence rather than a tactic for non-involvement, knit the decolonised world together.

'Mainstream' was born in that spacious age of idealism and elevated values, of hope and challenge. It is the life-work of Nikhil Chakravartty, now the doyen of Indian journalism, a constructive rebel, and a man of vision, wisdom and dedication. Over the decades 'Mainstream' has survived and enjoyed wide popularity among the Indian intelligentsia untainted by commercialisation and trivialisation characteristic of successful journalism in our time. I am glad that under the young and energetic stewardship of Sumit Chakravartty the Weekly is pursuing its original ideals and purposiveness, maintaining its standard and tradition of balanced and thought-provoking journalism.

On the occasion of the 35th anniversary of this brave journal of ideas, I extend to it my felicitations. May it have many more years of wise and far-sighted opinion-making.

Narayanan K.R.

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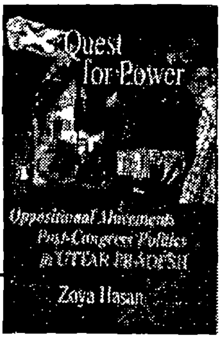

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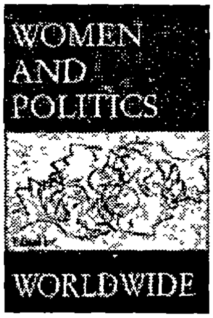

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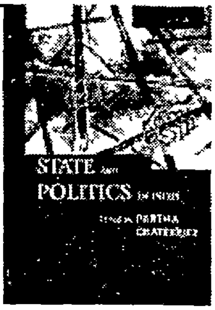

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Reducing the Scale and Scope of Human Rights Violations

MUBASHIR HASAN

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The basic laws of governance—those relating to police, magistracy, jails and revenue collection, under which Pakistan is mis-governed today—were made by the British in the sixties and seventies of the last century These laws determine the relationship between the individual and the state, between the ruler and the subjects They define the power of the state over the individual and the helplessness of the individual against the machinery of the state

The British Queen Victoria—who promulgated our criminal and civil laws and codes, the Acts of Police and Revenue—was a sovereign ruler answerable to none The Government of India Act of 1858 created what were called Imperial Civil Services in the departments of administration, police, education, engineering, forest, etc Officers for these services were recruited in England by the Secretary of State for India He issued their letters of appointment and retirement Only London could discipline them

Under the 1858 Act the Queen herself was the head of the military The Indian Army was not under the Governor-General-in-Council or even a Minister of the Queen Thus it was the Queen herself who was the guardian of civil peace in India through the Army Whenever the police was not enough to put down the people, the Army was called For this purpose the Indian Army was given special powers For example, an officer of the Army was authorised to arrest any civilian if he considered the arrest was necessary In India, the framework of the totality of all laws was created to maintain the supremacy of the Army in matters of enforcing civil peace

Dr Hasan is an outstanding figure in Pakistan's democratic movement Beginning as a distinguished civil engineer, he was elected to the Pakistan National Assembly in the historic 1970 elections He was the Minister of Finance, Planning and Economic Affairs in Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's Cabinet (1971-74) Thereafter he became Secretary-General of the Pakistan People's Party (1975-77) He was imprisoned under three military dictators—Ayub Khan, Yahya Khan and Zia-ul-Haq Zia imprisoned him in the torture cell of Lahore prison In 1984 he founded the Independent Planning Commission of Pakistan In 1994 he alongwith Asma Jehangir set up the civil liberties organisation, Savera *A member of the Human Rights Council of Pakistan, he was in charge of organising the late Mir Murtaza Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (Shahid)—headed by Murtaza's widow, Ghinwa—in Punjab in the course of the February 1997 parliamentary elections in that country*

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THE British were not welcome rulers for Indians They came by the sword, and ruled by the sword Their aim was to control the population politically and socially in order to exploit it economically The main devices of economic exploitation were political subjugation of the people, trade, transfer of the resources of India through payments to civil and military British officers, undervaluing the Indian rupee and later through establishment of industries and then financial investment houses Just as today the Japanese are investing in building highways and the Americans want to build electronic communication and the British want to develop and transmit electric power, in those days the British capital was used for building railways, telegraph and canals, and besides transportation networks of rivers and the high seas

The system of government introduced by the British in India was different from the system they had in Britain In Britain, the Queen and the House of Lords held all the power But as time passed they started transfering political, social and economic power to bodies elected by the people Elected bodies in cities, burroughs and counties came to exercise a large measure of power to govern themselves Today all power in Britain rests with elected persons, elected institutions and with those who can influence them, such as the financial, industrial and media houses

In the early decades of this century the people in he subcontinent started to wake up politically They began to demand political and social power from the British Ultimately they demanded independence The British resisted the demand and used force to curb the struggle They made the laws more and more harsh During the First World War the Defence of India Rules gave unlimited power to officers of the Crown such as Magistrates In 1919, in Amritsar at Jallianwala Bagh hundreds of people were killed by British soldiers The Army General Dyer who ordered the firing was hailed by many British citizens as a hero Between 1919 and 1939 several harsh laws were added in the statute books When World War II began the notorious Defence of India Rules were introduced once again They took away all the rights of the people and left them neither freedom nor rights

As the demand for independence grew following World War II, the people lost all respect for the laws made by the British and for the offices of the state responsible to implement the British system of governance, the bureaucracy The situation got worse in the forties and the British brought the Army General Wavell as the Governor-General and Viceroy of India He could bring neither peace nor security Finally, as the British were left with no option but to leave India, it had to be an Admiral of the British Fleet who was deputed to transfer power to the Dominions of India and Pakistan The British rule had begun with the supremacy of the armed might of the Army and it ended with the armed might finally transferring power

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WHEN power was transferred in 1947, Pakistan inherited all the British made laws The worst was the Defence of India Rules which became the Defence of Pakistan Rules These laws were in total violation of all that human rights stand for

The laws made by the British had no provision for any institution of citizens for the redressal of any grievance against the working of the state machinery Of course, there were the assemblies, national and provincial, which continue But they could only make laws When it came to the exercise of power of governance, these legislative bodies alongwith their Prime Ministers, Chief Ministers and Ministers, they could all be dismissed or made to resign at any time As citizens, Pakistanis can only pray before an officer of the state as a humble supplicant either directly or through an MPA (Member of Provincial Assembly) or an MNA (Member of National Assembly) The power of the state machinery is massive The overwhelming majority of the people have no way of redressing a wrong done by a government official There is no question of the people exercising social power as of right or of the redressal of the violation of any of their fundamental rights

The laws made by the British to maintain their imperial rule and our not changing them after Pakistan had come into being has inflicted a heavy cost We must take another look at our social, political and economic environment The system of governance built by the British has broken down The massive number of murders, dacoities, kidnappings, bank robberies reported in the daily press are evidence enough of the breakdown of the machinery of the state The estrangement between the people and the government is also complete The proverbial man-in-the-street continues to consider the police as a body of armed men which abuses him, tortures him, extracts money out of him—a body which operates for itself, for those in authority or for those who have money It is considered an alien entity meant only to rob and oppress Widespread incarceration and torture in police stations, jails and other interrogation centres is a routine procedure The police and para-military have little hesitation in committing brutal acts against suspected individuals, rioting mobs, agitating tribes, protesting labour and against militants demanding or deemed to be demanding a share in political power in the name of autonomy or self-determination When the rangers or the military are called out in aid of civil power, as they used to be in the British days, they are viewed as super police forces in aid of the very same police the people do not trust, indeed, the police they despise

Apart from the alienation of the people from the state, our social and cultural legacy also works against protecting human rights The bulk of the Pakistani society of today holds on to the ethos of the feudal order It remains authoritarian and resists the introduction of democratic governance The violation of human rights is widespread in the areas of the feudals The landlords, agricultural or tribal, make up an elite that is neither willing nor capable of rendering help in the task of just governance It still owns large tracts of land but is unable to play a leadership role in agricultural production The landlords and tribal chiefs have failed to transform

(Continued on page 52)

Democracy, Political Parties and their Culture

KAMALA PRASAD

It is usual for the country's political leaders to boast that democracy is mature and the deepening process is on If the establishment of a formal institutional framework was to be considered this would be true after the assignment of constitutional status to the Panchayati Raj institutions and urban local bodies There has also been substantial adherence to the procedures evolved over the years Procedural democracy has travelled some distance We also pride ourselves about the democratic spirit prevailing in the country The survival of the democratic form has been taken to be its strongest manifestation To that extent the claim is really justified There is evidence of political mobilisation by parties Multi-party system evolved from the very inception of the republic It also gave birth to the splitting propensities of the parties We have today more political parties than fifty years ago And they are increasing in numbers What is more, parties have been provided a stronger constitutional base after the anti-defection law became part of the Constitution during the eighties The special session of Parliament held to commemorate half a century of independence laid specific emphasis on the role of parties in furthering the cause of substantive democracy, ridding the politics and the political processes of ills that have appeared during the period

The country is witness to a war of institutions with each of the constitutional authorities forcing its role to the forefront There is some blurring of vision of the constructive role of politics as the prime mover of our political system The political functionaries are very keen to evolve themselves into institutions for amassing perks and privileges, injunctions and immunities but do not show the same zeal in upholding norms and evolving healthy conventions to strengthen those institutions Institutions have been personalised rather than the persons becoming institutionalised Legality is gaining in emphasis in preference to propriety and legitimacy Experience shows that laws suffer from loopholes This is specially so in an era when legislative business does not command proper attention and expertise The vast tribe of the legal profession is there to find out the loopholes and make the political processes get entangled in legal battles When Narasimha Rao was the Prime Minister it became current that faced with difficult political choice some problems were pushed on to the judiciary Ayodhya was the most outstanding case The Opposition did not help matters Taking the telecom issue to court got the rebuff from the judiciary in the verdict that privatisation and the processes leading to it was a matter for the executive and the legislature to decide on By now almost all political parties are exposed in searching for a legal course to find the answer to their political problems This dangerous course is fraught with serious consequences for the growth of a healthy democratic system and its practices Even the USA with its juridification inbuilt in the system does not reflect this proclivity as our political leaders are showing

Political Organisation

THERE have been three clear messages emanating from the operation of the political organisation Firstly, the elective discipline in organisation has been largely neglected Its restoration is proving to be a difficult task for the Centrist parties Secondly, the legislative wings of the parties are craving for a separate identity and have been given assertive recognition in the making and the unmaking of governments Finally, there is no clarity about the sources and dimensions of financial resources for the parties The influence of money power is variously acknowledged The organisation is passing through a period of prolonged crisis

The Communist Parties have been the one to attach critical importance to the party machine The BJP has a complex structure because of being the political front of the *Sangh parivar* However, it has held elections regularly The regional parties have shown no problems yet due to their dependence on outstanding leaders They are known by the leader rather than a powerful organisational machine that could pose problems for the leader The Centrist parties have displayed utter lack of electoral ethics within their organisation The attractions of nomination cult made popular very early after independence by the Congress party has been

The author, a distinguished administrator (who has now retired from the Administrative Service), is a former Chief Secretary of Bihar irresistible The Election Commission insisted recently that organisational elections should be completed within a time-frame under threat of derecognition The Congress revised its plans repeatedly but completed the process The Janata Dal faced the greatest hurdle and split in the process A number of court cases were started The taint of irregularity and improper manipulation persisted all the same In the process the problem of party discipline has appeared in almost all the parties The Congress has always been a party of factions but the BJP is increasingly assuming the same character This is apparent at the lower levels at present But the phenomenon is travelling upwards There is simmering discontent in almost all the parties about their functioning and the performance of their leaders There does not appear to be an easy answer or a rapid reversal of the current trends The importance of increasing attention to organisational performance cannot be underestimated any longer

This is brought home by the unintended separation of the legislative and the organisational wing in the operation of the anti-defection law in the current phase This becomes really blatant in case of national parties recognised as such by the Election Commission Parties are being wrecked by unscrupulous members in the legislative wing without reference to the position of split in the party as such The Legislature is thus overshadowing the working of the party machine This split between the electoral process and the working of the legislative wings of the parties is resulting in veritable anarchy in which the presiding officers are seen as crucial players The formation of a party of members of a split follows rather than precedes a split in the party involved As happened in UP, a split was engineered at hours' notice and recognised as such by the presiding officer without any interest in the formation of a new party When the baits are as high as have appeared in the case of UP for the first time in reward of ministership for each and every defecting member unlike any previous experience in the country, the dangers posed to the party system of government are beyond question The political class is forced to debate the issue seriously though the outcome cannot as yet be predicted The tragedy really lay in a national party of eminence making a virtue of offering baits and enticing members to split as the BJP leadership claimed it was engaged in at the national as well as the State levels.

The final issue of funding party activities has attracted less attention than the funding of elections The two cannot be separated Parties are becoming big spenders The issues involved have come to the attention from the failure of the parties to file income tax returns and the failure of the tax authorities to enforce the law Some of the politically sensitive corruption cases such as the *hawala*, JMM voting, Bihar fodder scam case are but the tip of the iceberg Mahindras are the one to have declared payment to political parties indicating that the Congress and the BJP are the biggest and equal beneficiaries from the corporate sector funding Other parties depend on small contributions However, bulk of the amount would seem to remain unaccounted going by public exhibition of large expenditures on demonstrations, *rath yatras*, rallies and melas organised by political parties It would seem that political parties do share in the generation of black money and that accounts for the lukewarm response to the call for stringent action to reduce its incidence The law courts will remain unequal to the task The political system has to devise ways of getting workers to mobilise resources to organise and run parties This will revive grassroot activity by parties The growing tendency to centralise party projection on a few leaders who also have to mobilise funds is weakening impulses for genuine public interest in political mobilisation This growing risk to democracy needs to be acknowledged and correctives initiated

The last fifty years has seen a devaluation of the party system of democratic functioning Mahatma Gandhi had the foresight to suggest that the era of a platform like the Congress was over Parties would henceforth fight for state power as the *cause celebre* The Congress should, therefore, remain away from this scramble and keep the respect of the people of India intact He was disregarded One can see the plight of the party today It is truly only fifty years old and claims by it to be 112 years old needs to be disregarded The other parties have done no better One old socialist has boasted that the socialists have split 50 times in the last fifty years and reunited 25 times The Communists too have split and are at present divided in half a dozen parties not to be reunited The party of the Right, the BJP, has split at the State levels and the old Jan Sangh is also in existence A number of other outfits claiming the Hindu political mantle stay either as regional or as multi-State formations The Muslim League survives in Kerala, it has been split But the Muslims elsewhere fight' elections as part of the dominant political parties It is power politics that has led to this splintering of political parties We have developed leader-based parties with the dynastic debasement projected by the Congress party The basis of inter-party coalition has, therefore, been difficult to sustain Defection as a game without rules is the illegitimate outcome of this phenomenon Having sown the seeds we are forced to reap the harvest

Unfolding Principles of Organising Majority

THE party leaders are in perpetual competition to occupy the seat of power or become king-makers to constantly threaten those in power As long as the Congress was the dominant force this was a one-sided game The emergence of coalitions and the regional parties has ended that era The positive effect of this development has been now acknowledged by a BJP stalwart, Suraj Bhan, the Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha, who wished that regional parties had appeared at the dawn of independence The defection game is more in evidence in the national parties than the regional parties The theoretical understanding of party organisation and conduct is, therefore, undergoing a typically Indian transformation Some people call it a period of transition The full contours are yet not visible

The first new phenomenon is the politics of invasion There has been a tradition of the national convention of a party Now competitive collection of crowds at the State capitals and in the national capital has generated indifference in the local population They are surely put to hardship not seen earlier The courts have been led to consider "bandhs" illegal since political activities cannot be permitted to disrupt the normal tenor of life in violation of the fundamental rights of the majority The process of carting crowds started with the Emergency of the seventies when supporters brought people from outside to express solidarity with Mrs Indira Gandhi Charan Singh planned a birthday crowd which led inexorably to the death of the Janata Party Government in Delhi Mahendra Singh Tikait laid a siege of the Delhi Boat Club for some days A non-political event, it did create a political landmark The most outstanding event was the collection of large bands of *kar sewaks* with the patronage of the BJP The sleepy town of Ayodhya was so fed up that it felt relieved at the demolition of the Babri mosque The locals had no hand in the crimes committed in 1992 This style of mobilisation feeds on the fear of harassment on the one hand and the prospects of spreading a political message far and wide on the other To the extent it replaces a sound process of political socialisation built brick-by-brick, it has a negative impact on the democratic means of dialogue and debate The gains of the BJP or Laloo Prasad or Ms Mayawati are a loss to democracy in the long run

The second significant development is the politics of other means or non-political tools This is mainly seen in the political parties and their functionaries resorting to public interest litigation (PIL) to extract political mileage This is seen more expressly in the Bihar fodder scam case The complaints are from the political alliance of the BJP and the Samata Party They took to approaching the monitoring bench of the High Court on the smallest pretext Laloo Yadav has been cornered judicially but the political impact is yet to be seen The demonstrations organised by these parties did not evoke the popular support expected by them. They also mounted pressure on the investigating agency The public exposure, stray comments, and motivated leaks made a mockery of silent and sound investigation Politics of other means is leader-oriented that hopes to gain by demolishing a leader through media trial ahead of filing chargesheets and trial In contrast it is also a means of impressing the gullible about the *bona fide* of the activists Done in consort with events like the *swarna jayanti rath yatra,* it drums up support for their cause However, when the question of conviction of the BJP Chief Minister in UP comes up, the same BJP makes a distinction between political crime and other crimes The IPC does not make this distinction And was Ayodhya, in which the chargesheet has been submitted, a political crime by any stretch of imagination? The politics of other means leads, then, to the ethics of double-standard Form is more important than substance As evolving so far it has adverse implications for constitutional means to be undermined since the aggrieved party uses equally devious means to protect its political constituency What cannot be done openly is done clandestinely

The third important ingredient is the use of administrative and legal loopholes to political advantage The presiding officers of the Legislatures have acted in ways that have led to questioning their motives The charge of partisanship has been made in the disposal of cases under the anti-defection laws in the Lok Sabha during the last Congress rule as well as in the State Legislatures ending with the latest in UP The strongest defence by the partisans has been that the loopholes have been put to partisan use but the decisions are perfectly legal Thus legality supercedes propriety and legitimacy Was this reasoning not the defence of the Emergency of the seventies? The other aspect is to use the administrative personnel and processes for partisan purposes It is conceivable that administration files disclose differences of interpretation and opinion on controversial matters This is bound to happen The leaks of such differences have become common with adverse comments against officials who may not be partisan at all In government parlance a distinction between *bonafide* and *malafide* action has to be made within the system and the circumstances that led to a particular course of action The misuse for political purposes of administrative differences of opinion hampers honest expression on conclusions of an analysis by the official class This is happening at a pace that will damage the essence of expertise and fearless assessment by those charged with advising government There may be some political gains temporarily but the long-term damage to the system is immense. Transparency will turn into a nightmare for governance if partisan politics is not kept out of the exercise

The fourth important component is the politics of corruption There is general acceptance of the increasing menace of this malady It was recognised almost thirty years ago that corruption at the top is the generator of corruption at all levels of political life and administration. JP proclaimed in a loud voice that the fountainhead of corruption was at the top Indira Gandhi's response was that corruption was a global phenomenon! The message was clear that corruption had no longer any social stigma This was a dramatic change from the past Since then official position and status was the most important route to amassing personal fortune, though in the name of the party to which a politician belonged There was once a Minister who used to carry the receiptbook of a number of voluntary organisations to collect contributions and he was the chairman of all of them The organisation suited the person approached More recently officials have been forced to contribute funds for arranging rallies addressed by important political functionaries It is political corruption that has made administrative corruption difficult to handle A Minister for Telecommunication once changed an official who insisted on dismissing on charges of corruption an office-bearer of the employees' union A Chief Minister faced with suspending an official on charges of corruption would not act, his advice was that politically aligned or related cases should not be expedited and only cases involving those with no clout should be screened for his order This is the design of political action to root out corruption The resulting administrative corruption thrives on the increased political links of the corrupt officials This can only dispute the claim of Mulayam Singh Yadav that corruption is more rampant in administration than in politics Politics of the country is, in fact, the source of administrative corruption

Industry and trade is not the sufferer but the promoter of corruption in this country Why should they retain political links otherwise? They offer facilities to political leaders on a continuing basis Overstaffing in government offices is part of political patronage Why should there be such overstaffing in industrial establishments? The nationalised sick industries have suffered because of political appointees in the establishments Politics is blamed for the 'licence-permit raj' Why did the industry try restricting licences for capacity creation so that shortages continued? The owner of a large corporate industry once approached me to have some matter expedited by a Deputy Commissioner When I rang up the officer I was told to my horror that this industry had approached the officer with a bagful of money and, therefore, the matter was now being probed more thoroughly! Business is not as innocent in the game as is made out to be by the protagonists of liberalisation There is no declining trend in corruption under the new economic regime Politics of defection certifies that Politics of *maha rallies* is a testimony to the costlier routes to political mobilisation There is no lack of money with the major political parties to modernise their style of working They need not resort to extortion, they have willing suppliers of black money The smaller parties do have to resort to blackmail and extortion Election alone is not the villain of the piece Politics is a part solution to the problem of unemployment It is an entertainment for the growing numbers of lumpen elements in society

This is pursued by the politics of opportunism Kanshi Ram is honest enough to own it as party policy Others do not preach it but practice it all the same Manipulations, coercions, and splits are but the more prominent manifestations In the era of coalitions threats followed by brinkmanship to create an atmosphere of crisis in the nation's politics are becoming very prominent The Congress has displayed it in ample measure in getting a Prime Minister changed, now it is engaged in splitting the coalition on the flimsiest pretext because of internal compulsions In UP the BJP and the BSP have proved unreliable allies The search for larger party gains at the cost of the alliance is highly disruptive of healthy politics but no respite is in view

Finally, there is the politics of the moral order Very frequently one hears a call by the political class for action on moral grounds No one believes in the sincerity of such calls Political class has developed a moral code that is different from the morality of others, more so the middle class that is articulated more often than not But this remains unexplained so far On the other hand a senior politician, Jyoti Basu, has bemoaned on November 19

> It is unfortunate that even senior leaders of major political parties believe that there is no place for morality in politics

For him, even "quitting a party is a corrupt act since our democracy was based on parties" The BJP, backed as it is by the forces of *Hindutva*, has boasted of a distinct identity and a commitment to morality. However, that has been sacrificed at the altar of pragmatism and has still been defended The Congress turned amoral long back for the sake of retaining its hold on power at any cost Morality of power can hardly have a precise definition Party politics in India is, therefore, bereft of any higher purpose than to gain access to seats of power for personal aggrandisement The public choice of the rulers is hard to make As a result there is increasing fragmentation of the popular mandate and its abuse thereafter Politics is no longer a means to serve public purpose The support base of governments is becoming smaller and smaller The majority of the population stands to lose in this process. Will the explanation of Rammanohar Lohia that "religion is long-term politics and politics is short-term religion" explain the present chaos in political conduct?

Parties and Governance

THIS evolving scenario would not be of much consequence but for the adverse consequences it has on the governance of the country. Attention has been drawn to the declining trends in governance for quite some time under majority, single-party rule as well as under coalitions. The distinction in decisiveness at the Central level made out in recent months is one of presentation rather than of substance P.V Narasimha Rao was the master of indecisiveness even with a working majority The decisiveness of Rajiv Gandhi did not bring relief to either Punjab or the North-East. His foreign policy alienated all our neighbours His economic management brought about the crisis of the early nineties apart from displacing him from power. The problem lies in the character of the parties in power, the means used in keeping power, and the conduct of the leaders as party functionaries If parties become a disposable commodity then everything goes with it Decline in governance can be ascribed to the decline in the working norms of parties and the conduct pattern of their members It may be instructive to look at just three aspects here, namely, the choice of candidates for elective bodies; the choice of Ministers, and the relations between the Ministers and the administration to drive home the reality

The British Indian administration followed from an imperial culture; free India has replaced it with a political culture. The answer to the oft-repeated irritation with the administration working at cross purposes with the political masters is that it has to respond to a democratic mandate The quality of the mandate determines the quality of administration The manpower in the elective battlefield and the scope for competitive rise in the ladder of leadership shapes the style of administration As long as a role in the freedom struggle was a qualification for the choice of candidates by political parties, a level of respectability was maintained Later, no general guidelines were evolved by the parties The rise of the professional class is, for instance, hardly reflected in the composition of the elective bodies In practice the sole criteria is to give party tickets to those with a winning chance; not those with a record for public work and local mobilisation Considerations of caste, community, property weighs over that of commitments, convictions, and stakes in public good Gradually, property dominance is giving place to black money and crime and mafia links Governance is not the objective for the choice of candidates Every candidate has his own private agenda that supercedes the party agenda flaunted publicly Every candidate who wins has the first encounter with the local officials to demonstrate his clout The legislator is omni-present Every local administration body has to contend with his presence He has his pie in every development project It is easy to speak of the rule of law Its operation in the bulk of government activity is not as easy to monitor. Persons do matter This is so in every democracy in the West too The difference lies in the quality of the elected representatives and their concern for effective delivery of party policies in implementing government programmes Political "intervention" is always welcome What has undermined governance is political "interference" in the routine functioning of the administration That is the basic problem in enforcing political accountability

It is totally unjustified to charge that the administration is lacking in accountability According to the norms, the Minister is the custodian of administrative accountability He in turn has to be accountable to the Legislature This structure has broken down Competitive politics with promises that cannot be kept is at the root of it Ministers have to show adequate interest in their charge The needed application is lacking in many That is seen on the floor of the Legislatures, including in the Central Parliament Ministers are prone to take more interest in particular cases to the detriment of the general implementation of the party and the government programmes That has made transfers and postings of officials into an industry which has to yield gains to the ministerial office. Upright officers are dubbed "hyper-technical". Even for those swearing by the *mantra* of stability, the administrative instability is the norm Finally, the Ministers are prone to duck accountability on the floor of the House leaving backlogs to be cleared by the officials in the committees In fact the assurances about works to be taken up can never be fulfilled within the allocated and voted Budget In a number of States the officials are humiliated in the process All this has to do with the choice of Ministers Experience, expertise, organising ability, and responsiveness to the structural compulsions of administration are the qualities at a discount. They represent social and regional interest groups, they represent the capacity to command a few votes in the party Above all, the choice of Ministers is now taken to be within the 'prerogative' of the Chief Minister Personalised choice is the rule Some change is appearing in the coalitions now in operation Add to this the turnover of Ministers The search for governing quality is a never-ending search in most cases Bihar and UP have set the new trend in Ministry-making. The UP Chief Minister is reported having claimed that history-sheeters in his Cabinet will work for the public good! All this creates problems in the relationship between the Ministers and the public servants The depth of seething discontent is to be experienced to be realised

This has truly to be a relationship of trust and respect In the parliamentary system there is an ascending ladder of accountability It is not being fulfilled due to an increasing mental block generating a moral hazard in risk management The realisation that both face the public directly, and the conduct of both has to be scrutinised by the judiciary is yet to evolve a new balance of relations A complex marks the relations at present as demonstrated by Mayawati in ample measure This was so during the regime of P.V Narasimha Rao at the Centre. He warned once that administrators should not consider themselves rulers because they interpret the rules! The general impression that administrators are arrogant, non-responsive, and indifferent to public good has to be seen in this context. There is a healthy concern that the administration should be insulated from partisan politics A new identity and a sense of self-assurance is sorely needed To the extent it is lacking at present, the governance presents a dismal picture

It is clear that effective and efficient government can be managed within the framework of political instability Long-term political stability in the country has been prone to authoritarianism and posed a serious threat to the democratic fabric of the nation The coalition alternative has been better It does not appear so at the Central level only because it has not been sustained for a reasonable period A constructive framework for good governance can be conceived only within the inherent separation of the government and the administration in the network of accountability under the parliamentary system Depoliticisation of the instruments of governance may not be possible at the current stage of political development The second best thing would then be to provide a sense and a framework of stability to administering instruments of the state This will, however, require a political consensus No party has articulated the issue. What we have so far is the negative perception of governance The time to reflect on the positive steps must come some day, the earlier the better

The Political Approach

To revert to Jyoti Basu again, our democracy is to be sustained by the political parties The parties are known by the quality of leaders and the constituency they represent. They have to define the basic ethics in politics There has to be some predictability about the ways the parties will conduct the business of the state and preserve the spirit of the Constitution This is the minimum needed in the prevailing gloom generated by escalating violence in society and infraction of the democratic regime of law and order To the extent the root of the malaise lies in politics, the remedy has to be presented by the political parties There is a need in effect to debate the performance of the last fifty years and to prepare to improve on it in the next fifty There is no sign of this as yet The promises held out by the new economic policies will flounder unless this matter is addressed There will be no foreign assistance for it Constitutional authorities can only warn and they are doing it with increasing insistence The reform lies within the realm of political action The critical work is inside the party system That realisation should dawn on those who wish this or that organisation to provide relief, either temporary or more enduring If that faith is gone the political system as conceived is surely in danger The turmoils of the last decade or so in almost every part of the country with differing intensity have been serious enough and have demonstrated that police and military action provide the opportunity for political initiatives to take root The call goes unheeded with the rising public doubt in the capacity of our political leadership to manage change meaningfully This erosion of public faith in our institutions and the faltering performance in the welfare of the people are a deadly combination which threaten the safety of our constitutional system ◼

Uttarakhand : Case for a Separate State

C H. HANUMANTHA RAO

The current agitation for the formation of a separate State of Uttarakhand has been triggered off by the move to introduce reservation in jobs on the basis of the principle of 'uniformity' within a State. Superficially speaking, this agitation for separate Statehood would appear to be a means to get over the reservation issue. But fundamentally, this represents a protest against the refusal to recognise the special features of the hill region and the disabilities it suffers from. It is a protest against the prevailing practice of administering the hill region through remote control by applying 'uniform' yardsticks throughout the State despite the great regional diversity in this large State. The hill areas of Uttar Pradesh continued to remain backward with meager opportunities for livelihood on account of defective development strategy and ineffective implementation of schemes. This is a consequence of a 'strait-jacket' approach inherent in a large State. But for these reasons, the agitation for the formation of Uttarakhand would not have assumed such serious proportions. Therefore, this agitation is neither accidental nor unexpected. Indeed, if there was no objective basis for separate Statehood, the agitation would have been focussed on the percentage of reservations in jobs *as such*. This is what has been happening in several other States. In fact, the people of Uttarakhand deserve to be complimented for quickly extricating themselves from internal dissensions and channelling their movement in a forward-looking direction.

At the intellectual and planning level, the problems of the region have been well understood. The difficult topography of the region, the accentuation of hardships following the snapping of the traditional trade links with Tibet, the unsuitability of the soils for cultivating field crops, the increasing denudation of forests due largely to commercial felling to satisfy the rising demand from the plains, the incentive for educating children as the only alternative source of earning, the large out-migration of able-bodied males and the consequent emergence of a 'money order economy' with increasing feminisation and senilisation of the hill economy and society, etc. have been well documented. It is also recognised that the hill areas have a comparative advantage in horticulture and agro-processing which have a favourable export demand besides being environment-friendly, that the expansion of public distribution of foodgrains is necessary to protect the environment by discouraging the cultivation of food crops, and that there is a great potential for the location of pollution-free industries which are skill-intensive such as electronics and related software. The need for the active involvement of the people, particularly women, for the protection of environment has been repeatedly stressed. It is also well recognised that the women power, the resources of disciplined and trained, but unemployed, ex-Army personnel, and the skills of educated youth remain to be harnessed. What is more, there is a separate department of Hill Area Development which is entrusted with the task of planning and implementation of the development programmes for the region by channelling funds including special assistance from the Centre for the purpose.

The author, a distinguished economist, acquainted himself with the problems of the UP hill region as a Member of the Planning Commission (1982-86), and thereafter as the head of the Advisory Council on the implementation of the 20-point programme (set up by the late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi).

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DESPITE all this, if the impact in terms of development, conservation of environment and the expansion of employment opportunities has not been satisfactory, and if the feeling of neglect persists in the region, the inescapable conclusion is that all this wisdom has largely remained on paper and has not been backed by effective administrative arrangements for putting these ideas into practice. It is readily acknowledged that there is no regional planning worth the name for the hill areas in Uttar Pradesh. The so-called regional plan is reduced essentially to putting together of schemes undertaken by various departments at the State capital, at best 'regional planning' amounts to monitoring of resources into the region on account of such schemes. The rural development programmes, for example, are still formulated and implemented according to the rigid guidelines issued from the State capital, despite the conditions in hills being vastly different from the plains To give another telling example, despite the fact that women undertake the major responsibility for agricultural operations, and despite repeated assertions that the latent power of women would be harnessed, there is hardly any woman extension worker or *gramsevika* in place in the remote areas, with the result that the extension workers usually while away their time with unemployed men in tea-shops without transmitting any knowledge to the women farmers in the field!

The basic explanation for the failure to formulate and implement effectively the regionally relevant plan is simply that the power to formulate and implement such a plan is not vested in the region itself The administration of a large State composed of diverse regions suffers from its irrelevance as well as ineffectiveness On account of the irrelevance of its policy approach to any specific region, its ineffectiveness becomes a blessing in disguise to some extent, as the harm inflicted could be greater when wrong policies are implemented effectively! In practice, however, irrelevance itself is often responsible for ineffective implementation, apart from inaccessibility of services inherent in a large State Historically, our States in most cases were organised in the colonial period on considerations which suited the rulers at that time Speedy development of a region was certainly not one such consideration. After independence, States have been reorganised from time to time on linguistic and other considerations in response to agitations by the people concerned Development *as such* was rarely the guiding principle, although the small size of some of the States resulting from reorganisation has proved to be conducive to their speedy development Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh are clear examples of this In smaller States, the Ministers and the civil servants have an intimate knowledge of each village and the people in turn can easily approach the powers-that-be when the need arises. The relative homogeneity of the State ensures the relevance of the development plans formulated; and smaller distances and fewer number of people ensure the accessibility of services and effective implementation of schemes

Despite the protracted debate in the country on the need for decentralised planning at the district and village levels, decentralisation in planning in India is effective today basically at the level of States vis-a-vis the Centre At this level, decentralisation does seem to have promoted growth, and where institutional reforms have been successful, it seems to have made a favourable impact on social justice also The effectiveness of planning at the State level depends very much on the size of the State The smaller the size of the State, the greater is its ability to take decisions quickly, to design programmes in response to the felt needs of the people as well as in keeping with the resource endowments of the region, and to implement them effectively The size of the State, its relative homogeneity and the structural changes brought about seem to have had a greater impact on growth and social justice so far than formal decentralisation of planning below the State level

In the big States like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, decentralisation of planning at the sub-State levels is highlighted as a felt need and one finds a visible concern among politicians and administrators for decentralised planning However, it is precisely in these States that decentralised planning is least successful It appears as if the very largeness of size which necessitates decentralisation militates against it For one thing, a larger State is also, as a rule, a more powerful unit in terms of concentration of political as well as bureaucratic power Devolution of functions and resources to a large number of districts, or even at the sub-regional level, would mean immediate parting with the enormous power enjoyed by the politicians and bureaucracy at present as also foregoing the opportunities for the distribution of patronage Secondly, decentralisation within a large State involves considerable amount of effort at the State level by way of coordinating and monitoring developmental work relating to innumerable units These States are thus too large and centralised to embark upon decentralisation

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It is, however, wrong to believe that regardless of the size of the State, decentralised planning at the district level, when it is effective, can go a long way in reducing regional disparities in development For one thing, the backwardness of each of these regions, consisting of a number of districts, arises either from specific agro-climatic factors or from long periods of neglect before they were merged into composite States What is required, therefore, to tackle the backwardness of these regions is an integrated approach to the planning of infrastructure for each of them This is necessary even for making district planning effective by providing infrastructure which is beyond the district-level outlays The potential district-level Plan outlays account for only about 25 to 30 per cent of the State Plan outlays This means as much as 70 to 75 per cent of outlay is still planned and allocated at the State level for various infrastructural items including, particularly power and major and medium irrigation, which have a bearing on the development of the individual districts Besides, in a mixed economy like ours, the level and pattern of private investment, particularly in the non-agricultural sectors, which can be influenced by State policies, is an important determinant of development

The larger States, especially those composed of highly heterogeneous units, have failed to reduce disparities in development between different regions Marathwada and Vidarbha in Maharashtra, Saurashtra and Kutch in Gujarat, Telengana and Rayalaseema in Andhra Pradesh, and Uttarakhand in Uttar Pradesh are clear examples When some of these areas were merged to constitute the linguistic States at the time of the States' reorganisation, as in the case of Maharahstra and Andhra Pradesh, despite the recommendation to the contrary by the States' Reorganisation Commission, it was done with the assurance that special steps would be undertaken to bring these backward regions on par with the developed regions However, the politics of planning in a democratic set-up within the State as a political unit have been such that it became increasingly difficult to impose sacrifices on the developed regions to benefit the backward regions The evidence, on the contrary, points to the accentuation of disparities as in the case of Marathwada, Vidarbha, Rayalseema and Uttarakhand This has happened despite the constitutional provisions to safeguard the interests of the backward regions through the establishment of Regional Development Boards with special powers to the Governors for monitoring the progress, as in the case of Maharashtra and Gujarat

The size and relative homogeneity of the State as a unit of governance assume special significance in the country in the context of the ongoing economic reforms The basic philosophy underlying these reforms for structural adjustment is to promote efficient utilisation of resources by releasing the creative energies of entrepreneurs and the people at large This is to be done by opening up the economy and encouraging competition with a view to providing incentives for technological upgradation and innovation It is also recognised that for these reforms to be compatible with social justice, the State has to play an important role towards empowering the common people by enlarging their freedoms, widening economic opportunities for them and improving their skills and capabilities

The State Governments have started competing with each other for attracting capital and technology from outside by offering various incentives They have to take steps to improve their delivery systems for reaching the targetted poor so as to provide basic social services efficiently All this requires 'good governance' for promoting development with social justice Already, the indications are that the smaller and efficient States, especially those infrastructurally well-placed, are better able to attract capital and entrepreneurship As expected, among the bigger States, such resources are moving into regions which are better endowed with infrastructure If the State Governments fail to improve infrastructure in the backward regions and social services in general for the weaker sections, then the accentuation of regional disparities and income inequalities is almost a certainty Since the role of the state has become important to speedily cope with the adverse consequences of structural adjustment, and indeed for influencing such adjustment in a direction that is humane and equitable, 'good governance' has to be put on the top of the agenda for reform A situation is fast developing when the existing organisation of at least some of the big States may become incompatible with the objective of economic reforms, that is, stepping up efficient and equitable growth

In the new context, when efficiency of resource-use and equitable development have become the prime objectives, viability of a State defined as a relatively homogeneous administrative unit rather than its 'financial viability' should be the overriding consideration in organising the State boundaries Basically, the idea is that even if the amount of resources which are being allocated presently for a backward region in a composite State remain the same after reorganisation, the content of the Plan as well as the quality of its implementation would improve vastly to justify such reorganisation As it is, several big as well as small States are financially 'deficit' just as the 'surplus' States happen to belong to both the categories Even though the degree or the severity of financial 'deficit' among the States varies depending upon their natural endowments, historical background and levels of development, the fact remains that even some of the biggest States in the country, whose per capita income is among the lowest, show deficits even after the devolution by the

Finance Commission Many of the smaller hill States today depend almost entirely on Central assistance for their State Plans

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So far as Uttarakhand is concerned, even though it is part of a larger State, the accepted practice for long has been to provide special Central assistance in order to ensure that its Plan outlay is comparable to that for Himachal Pradesh For example, during the Seventh Plan, special Central assistance accounted for nearly 60 per cent of the Plan outlay for Uttarakhand, as against over 80 per cent in the case of Himachal Pradesh Under the existing system of federal financial transfers in India, both by the Finance Commission and the Planning Commission, certain objective and rational criteria have been evolved over a period of time, through a process of consensus-building, which take into account the own capacity of a State to mobilise resources as well as its legitimate needs Whereas financial resources are thus transferable on the basis of rational criteria, political will and administrative capabilities, which are the essential prerequisites for the efficient use of resources, are not so transferable!

It is unfortunate that even in a democratic polity like ours, political consensus in the region seeking separate Statehood, and even consensus at the level of the composite State concerned, have failed to persuade the Centre to accede to the demand States have often been reorganised in the past only in response to protracted and violent agitations In the case of Uttarakhand, the State Legislature has unanimously passed resolutions twice in favour of separate Statehood under two different sets of governments Let us hope that the imaginative, forward-looking and development-oriented approach to the reorganisation of States would prevail and procedures would be evolved to resolve such issues through peaceful and democratic means by ascertaining the consensus as well as through expert examination by a high-level independent body But the formation of Uttarakhand need no longer be delayed, because both political consensus and expert opinion are overwhelmingly in its favour ■

INDIAN ASSOCIATION OF SOCIAL SCIENCE INSTITUTIONS (IASSI)

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Social Science Journal devoted to Advancement of Society through Greater Social Understanding

Vol. 16 **July-September 1997** **No 1**

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Chasing the Legislative Majority

C B MUTHAMMA

A former Prime Minister of India stands charged with having bribed Opposition Members of Parliament to vote for him to save his government in a vote of confidence He had the options of depending solely on his minority party in Parliament with the certainty of losing power or finding the necessary extra votes by whatever means they could be found If indeed he bribed Opposition MPs with hefty cash incentives to vote for him—a matter under consideration by the courts—it would mean that he did not wish to lose his Prime Ministership His loss of Prime Ministership would also have other consequences—it could involve the fall of his party from power, probably setting off a commotion within his party This was probably in the minds of his party members, several of whom stand implicated in the alleged bribery deal There could have been a general destabilisation of the political situation with efforts to put together a new majority in Parliament, or probably a fresh election It was a crisis inherent in the need for a standing party majority (whether a single party or of a coalition)

Even as the case of the accused former Prime Minister and sundry members of his party is in the courts, we have the case of the UP Government where a party majority was established by the defection of large numbers of legislators from the Opposition parties to the party aspiring to form a government Nearly all these defectors were given ministerial appointments, swelling the Council of Ministers to a mammoth 93 members The public might be forgiven for assuming that the aspiring Chief Minister and his party had bribed the Opposition legislators with promises of ministerial posts The law cannot be invoked in the case of the new State Government and its Chief Minister since the defections were within the permitted limits. This is an illustration of the limitations of the law. If, as is being demanded after the formation of the new government in UP, the acceptable quantum of defection is raised, the situation would not really change As it is, it is possible that the number of defections has increased after the so-called anti-defection law, as it sets a minimum for the defection to be valid If the minimum is raised, it will be necessary to raise the number of defectors, and given our political system and the way it works, this is exactly what will happen

While the previous government in UP was actually functioning with an uneasy coalition and a rotating Chief Ministership, the first Chief Minister under the agreement functioned as if she was the Chief Minister of the Dalits and nobody else and nothing else mattered Though a constructive long-term policy of schools for Dalit children was put in place, there was a headlong rush into ill-considered policies to create a status and image for the Dalits which seemed to think in terms of undoing centuries of injustice in six months Bureaucrats were pushed around with total disregard to the implications of running a stable and impartial administrative structure A high-cost item like the Ambedkar Park was undertaken which, given the need, both of the State and of the country for more urgently required developmental works, more or less asked to be attacked Sure enough, it was brought into question and subjected to a probe as soon as the sponsoring Chief Minister demitted office Some of the animus against the loudly partisan Chief Minister is likely to rub off on the long-suffering Dalits themselves Both the continuous party confrontations and manoeuvres and the consequent confrontation between sections of the people are built into the system

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Is any of this in the national interest? Is a ninetythree-member State Council of Ministers in the national interest? Many of them are alleged to have criminal records, and but for party support, would probably not be in the Legislature We have the case of another State which, like UP, is one of the poorest and most backward States in the country, with a Council of Ministers of 74 members The reason is the same—to give the Ministers an incentive to stay on in the government party, so that its majority is ensured That majority was used to circumvent the law, when a Chief Minister, implicated in a massive scam, was put in jail The party majority could be used to install

The author, a senior diplomat (who has now retired from the Foreign Service), served as India's Ambassador in various capitals his wife as the Chief Minister so that he could still remain the power behind the throne It is a different matter that under our system the wife could be installed as the Chief Minister though she was not a member of the Legislature This was a minor detail, provided the party majority was with the jailed Chief Minister The wife could be accommodated in a safe seat vacated for her by a loyal party member Without the party majority she could not have become the Chief Minister

A comparable legislative party majority made it possible for a Chief Minister to be installed in Haryana a few years ago Then with the powers of Chief Ministership in his hand, he proceeded to rig the infamous Meham by-election in order to make himself a Member of the Legislature That the venture did not succeed was thanks entirely to the action taken by a non-governmental organisation of citizens, and not to any political or official institutions, including the Election Commission The law cannot be expected to check events of this type Mega Cabinets are increasingly becoming the norm, at the cost of the country

The games of majority-building are proceeding merrily, at the Centre and in the States It is a kaleidoscope, one thing one moment and something else the next, as in Gujarat At the Centre, from one moment to the next one does not know if the government will stand or fall The issues are always party advantage or personal interests, not public interest Stability depends not on the strength of any party, but on the weakness of all of them In the States legislators get kidnapped *en masse* by parties aspiring to win them over, or by parent parties aiming to block their defection Much is made of the fact that regional parties are involved in forming the coalition government at the Centre, and this is held up as proof of federalism But how representative of the people of their States are the parties involved? If they were representative, would there be so many demands for new, small States from so many parts of the country? Do the partisan governments like those backed by either the Lingayats or the Vokkaligas in Karnataka represent the whole State? On the one hand it is possible in our party system to win a majority in the Legislature on a minority of the electoral votes (often partisan votes), which is what fuels and keeps alive caste and community divisions. In Karnataka both the Vokkaligas and Lingayats together are a minority Even so, our Vokkaliga Prime Minister, Deve Gowda, could not face a by-election to the Lok Sabha from his own State, and had to be given a Rajya Sabha membership So whom did he represent? Obviously the majority in Parliament, cobbled together by the State parties and politicians, all with different objectives and State preoccupations and State political animosities carried into Parliament and working against national solutions to national issues

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THE system of legislative majorities has given us a Prime Minister—Chandra Shekhar—who rose to the post wholly and solely by virtue of defecting from his parent party with five members to meet the valid acceptable minimum for defection So with his five-member team in Parliament, and with the Congress party's support, he made decisions for this country Whom did he represent? The answer was given at the next general elections, when he emerged again with a five-member party We have had a Prime Minister who was not a Member of Parliament, and, being unwilling to face a parliamentary by-election, was elected to the Rajya Sabha—in effect, a decision clearly by the political parties, not by the people It was an illustration, if one was required, that governments are made by the politicians and political parties, not by the people In fact, the majority of the Prime Minsiters we have had—more than two-thirds of them—could not have won an absolute majority of the electoral votes in their own States, let alone in the whole country We have at the moment a Prime Minister who is a Member of the Rajya Sabha, also having been put there by the various parties and their politicians •

And these parties, which juggle around the governments at the Centre and in the States—are they themselves representative? The BJP, which formed a government in Delhi for thirteen days, had twenty per cent of the electoral votes cast In forming a minority government, they had probably hoped for some defections, notwithstanding the "untouchable" status acquired by them But if they had received just a few per cent more of the people's votes, maybe twentyfive per cent, they could, conceivably, have won a majority in Parliament and formed a government It is a partisan political party, appealing to a partisan electorate, and in power would have felt justified in carrying out a partisan programme, as did a former BJP Government in UP

This scenario is, by and large, true of the regional parties At a given moment, it would have been possible for a party seeking popular support in Tamil Nadu to pander to the sentiments of some sections of the populace by backing the LTTE in Sri Lanka It might even have been possible for a party, elected on other issues to a government majority and voted in by a less than a third of the electoral votes, to have its own hidden agenda for backing the LTTE's activities in Tamil Nadu, and possibly also to convince the Central Government that there would be strong feelings in Tamil Nadu in favour of the LTTE It is another matter that there were strong demands in the Union Parliament for some action to help the Tamils of Sri Lanka when they were being pounded by the Sri Lankan Government forces Sympathy for the Tamils of Sri Lanka and their grievances was not limited to the people of Tamil Nadu In fact, it is often the separate State political entities that prevailed at the Centre, with or without the so-called "federalism" of today The party at the Centre has to think of a strategy to keep its majority at the Centre which is dependent on the majorities it can win in the States, which latter requires its own party to be in power in the States or alternatively, to have a party in the State which is friendly to its aspirations at the Centre This would lead to an understanding with a regional party like the DMK This probably explains the Centre's role vis-a-vis the LTTE's operations in Tamil Nadu and its Muslim Women's Protection Bill with an eye on the Muslim parties especially in Kerala where it was allied with them, and its unwillingness (which it shared with all the other parties) to denounce the Deorala *sati* in Rajasthan

Had the Prime Minister of India been installed in power by the people of India by an absolute majority (50 per cent plus) he or she would have been able to count on the large and constructive national majority on every issue, though a different majority each time In a situation like the one in Sri Lanka where many considerations had to be balanced in the best interests of India—the vital interests of a friendly neighbouring country, the genuine grievances of the Tamils of Sri Lanka, the natural sympathy of the Tamils of India for the Tamils of Sri Lanka—not necessarily amounting to a desire to disrupt the functioning of India or Indian policy—in such a situation what was required was a national, not a regional approach It was possible for a Tamil Nadu Government to lead its people to a sober assessment of the situation rather than whip up passions but this pre-supposes that the local parties, like those elsewhere in the country, would not need to aggravate issues in order to gain legislative majorities, usually achieved on the basis of electoral minorities The present DMK Chief Minister, in his earlier stint in the post (during which he thought fit to insult the Indian troops returning from Sri Lanka), had well under one-third of the electoral votes

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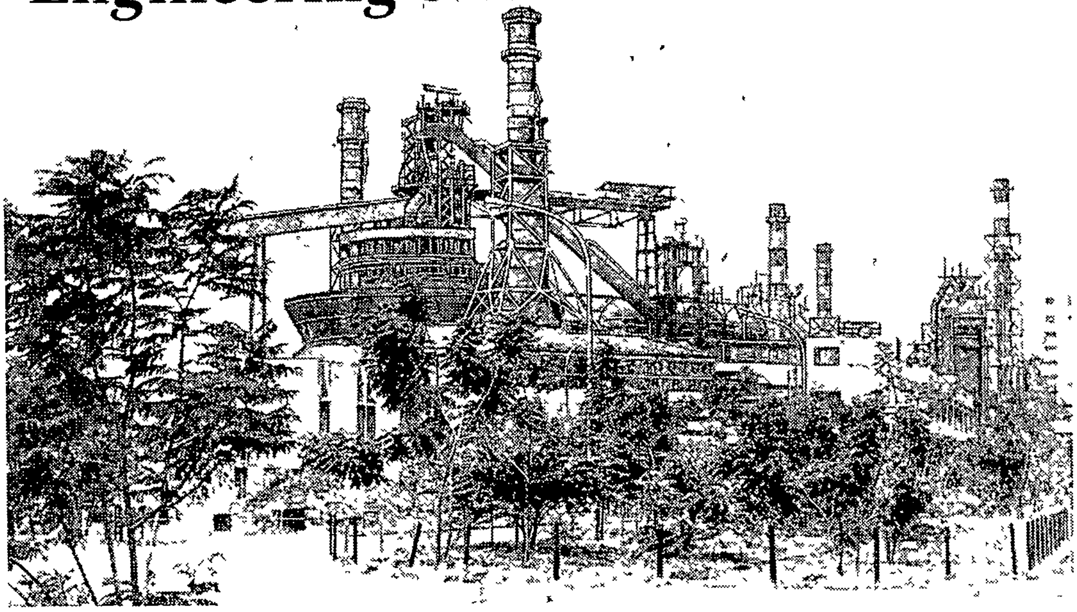
QUITE apart from all these considerations, under our system, people vote more for parties than for individuals Aspiring politicians seek the patronage of parties, not of people, to become electoral candidates Independents do not stand much of a chance So when votes are taken under a party banner, under what political or moral justification do legislators go party-hopping? Perceptive analysts like B K Nehru have been warning for years that under our system the wrong kind of people were likely to get into politics and into power That situation has materialised in front of us now

So our political cult of the legislative majority gives us neither stability, nor accountability, nor truly representative governments, nor indeed, if we would face the fact, governments at all, in any meaningful sense of the term In order to win legislative majorities parties do everything illegal and immoral—take black money to swell party funds, take the support of criminal elements and put them in power (we have the Election Commission vouching for the presence of criminal elements in the Legislatures), divide the country on caste, community, language, ideology or whatever else comes in handy, promote bands and other destructive activities that disrupt normal social and economic life in the country, waste crores of money on party celebrations and the purchase of support where necessary, or on mammoth Councils of Ministers, and produce Ministers who are chosen for reasons other than their competence, or spend vast sums on mid-term elections The total exercise has nothing to contribute to the growth and progress of this country This is what accounts for the grim overall picture after fifty years of independence—an India at the bottom of the international league of nations in all growth parameters and at the top of the list in all negative indicators of development The party majority is the road to the ambitions of politicians, who will first try and win a party majority in an election or failing that, cobble a majority later in the Legislature, with no principles involved The regional rivalries of regional parties stand in the way of their cooperating with their regional rivals in the Central Government In other words, the regional objectives of parties will take precedence over national interests even at the Centre Even these regional rivalries relate to party advantage or personal ambitions, not to public welfare

(*Continued on page 40*)

Engineering cleaner environment



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Currency Turmoil in South-East Asia

DALIP S. SWAMY

The recent worldwide turmoil in stock markets and currencies is significant for two reasons One, its epicenter was in Asia but it persisted until the New York Stock Exchange's Dow Jones Index plunged by 554 points on October 27, 1997. Secondly, the decline in stock markets have been followed by currency depreciation in South-East Asia, they indicate a serious disequilibrium in asset prices and exchange rates

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THE current financial crisis has been disastrous to the South-East Asian countries They were the fastest growing economies and markets in the world They were able to compress centuries of development into decades and therefore their development was adorably called the 'Asian Miracle' The currency turmoil shattered those economies. Their GDP has been slashed by about 25 per cent Miracles are not likely to survive since the bubbles have started

To the advanced countries of the West too, the crisis is not a marginal one The worldwide rout on October 23, 1997 resulted in a $ 414 billion drop in the total value of the global stock markets. As the collapse of confidence persisted with worldwide cascading effects, the drop in global capitalisation on October 27 was more than twice $ 966 billion this downsizing of financial assets (on both days combined together) is about six per cent of global capitalisation which is estimated at $ 29 trillion at present Its repercussions will continue for some time On the Black Monday of 1987, the market crash had destroyed $ 1 7 trillion of global stock value which was 20 per cent of global capitalisation at that time The decade long 'Asian Miracle' and alongwith it the process of globalisation seems to have halted with a global concern for the financial markets

The European and American stock markets have come back from the brink, perhaps through cover-up operations by governments everywhere But the scenario reminded the West's investors just how fragile is the current global boom and proved how nervous the Western markets are too It became crystal clear that globalisation works both ways With the positive perceptions of a region capital flows in, generating growth impulses and as the perceptions reverse capital flows out, leaving behind an economy littered with bankrupt industries and financial institutions

The author is a Professor of Business Economics, University of Delhi (South Campus)

At the Seventh Summit Meeting of G-15 the Malaysian Prime Minister, Dr Mahatir Bin Mohamad, said.

> Decades of sweat, toil and tears since independence have come to a naught when in the space of a few months, currency traders impoverished our countries merely by devaluing our currencies None can take this kind of shock

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SUCH a sharp decline in asset prices could not have been possible without structural weakness The seeds of the South-East Asian turmoil can be found in its golden decade of 1985-95, when its economies were booming, its exports were expanding at 20-25 per cent a year, it was awash in liquidity and its stocks were skyrocketing. This growth attracted and was further spurred by vast streams of direct and portfolio investment from Japan and faraway places (like the US). In the age after Reagan and Laffer, Wall Street floated Emergency Market Mutual Funds that outperformed the general run of New York money managers—up until rationally cool money began to run out of Thailand. It was a reply of the Mexican turnaround. Alongwith capital, tourists poured into South-East Asia, setting off a building boom But after the devaluations of the Chinese currency in 1994 and of yen in 1995 the competitive advantage of the South-East Asian exports significantly eroded in the world market In 1996 and early 1997 the growth of their exports sharply decelerated and tourism also slacked off (For example, the growth of Thai exports declined from 30 per cent in 1994 to 6 5 per cent in 1996-97) The building boom nevertheless continued leading to surplus hotel rooms As the overvalued stocks were sold and the capital losses were absorbed by investors, liquidity crisis surfaced with increase in interest rates The decline in tourism, capital losses in the stock markets and the rise in interest rates deflated property prices, reinforcing a downward cyclical movement Consequently, many banks and manufacturing companies failed and unemployment soared.

It happened first in Thailand, because it was erhaps the weakest link in the chain of globalisation hailand basked under the glory of double digit rowth in both GDP and exports with an average aving rate of 37 per cent for a decade (1985-95) The conomic boom in Thailand was based on new ssembly plants, using (70 per cent) foreign omponents imported from Japan or South Korea and mploying low wage, a docile and hard working abour force, exporting computers, electrical ppliances, garments, etc These plants were typically oncentrated in the capital city (Bangkok), sponsored y local businessmen in league with politicians, inanced by foreign loans arranged through local anks and other financial institutions under the nfluence of sponsoring businessmen and politicians his process also created a boom in real estate, a ignificant part of export profits and British funds vere invested in urban properties

Mainly interested in maximising their short-term eturns from exports and real estate the Thai elites eglected education and research so that the three er cent growth in productivity lagged far behind the rowth in exports Thailand's import dependent xport driven boom (with 43 per cent import content f exports) could not withstand emerging competition rom Chinese exports China had two advantages er labour in Shanghai received one-third of wages f her counterpart in Thailand and one-half of that n Jakarta and the productivity of her skilled labour orce was rising over the decade In 1994, China devalued her currency so that her exports became iercely competitive in the Asian markets The first o feel the Chinese competition were the Thai industries As Thai exports lost their ground in the export market her balance of payments deficit increased At the same time the capacity utilisation of new assembly plants declined Consequently over-investment in new industries and real estate created the crisis of loan repayment in 1996 At the first sign of weakness on the export front the smart money began to flow out The decline in exports, deepening trade deficit, outflow of capital, pressure of repayment of foreign loans reinforced each other to deepen the crisis The myopic Thai elites (eight governments in the last 10 years) first tried to protect the sponsored enterprises by supporting the currency in the forex market After losing about $19 billion (45 per cent) of its reserves with no sign of reversal of capital flight Thailand had to delink its currency, the baht, from the US dollar on July 2, 1997, a day after China took over Hong Kong

And then the baht nose-dived by 25 per cent against the US dollar in less than two weeks This sharp depreciation of the baht intensified the foreign loan payment crisis resulting in bankruptcy of 48 financial enterprises with 4712 manufacturing enterprises closing down Tremors of the Thai crisis were felt from Malaysia and Indonesia to richer countries like Singapore The squeeze that has taken place through the deflation of financial assets (a surrogate of national wealth) is mind-boggling For example, the decline in the Malaysian stock market was equivalent to the loss of $ 250 billion in two months which is twice the size of her annual GDP A rough estimate based on the prevailing financial conditions (average price-earning ratio, the proportion of corporate earnings to GDP and capital-output ratio) suggests that Thailand lost about 2 5 per cent of GDP owing to the decline in capitalisation and about three per cent of GDP on account of loss in the forex market The latter loss is borne by the central bank while the former will reverberate throughout the economy inflicting bankruptcy and unemployment This painful process of adjustment is indeed a vast human misery

The devastating capacity of globalisation is like a cyclone which uproots the formidable structures in a short time Before the authorities notice the financial fury, it is too late, the devastation is already completed this happens because in today's financial world hedge funds are substantial, often larger than the reserves of a country's central bank George Soros operates with $ 12 5 billion of personal wealth and $ 18 billion under his control through his financial enterprises and the Sultan of Brunei operates with $23 billion under his control Bill Gates with $ 40 billion of funds at his command tops all of them but his stock operations have not yet attracted media attention The IMF has estimated that half-a-dozen major trust funds can mobilise $ 900 billion to attack any currency they think is overvalued These funds are hypersensitive to changes in underlying national economic conditions

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Four months after the Thai crisis the speculative pressure converged on Hong Kong which was supposed to be different from Thailand Hong Kong has $ 85 billion of reserves, no debt, and its prosperity is based on entrepot trade and tourism In the wake of a mini crisis in 1983 the Hong Kong dollar was pegged to the US dollar at 7 78 Since then it has remained remarkably stable, weathering the crisis of 1987, 1989, and 1994 when the single day fall in the Hang Seng (stock market index) was more than 10 per cent The only other exchange rate regime like it is Argentina, which survived just this kind of attack in 1995 at considerable cost to the domestic economy that year The Hang Seng's price-earning ratio at 10 is also not dear But earning prospects of the Hong Kong companies might have been thrown into doubt by the earlier Asian currency contagion Responding to the first significant speculative raid on the Hang Seng the Chinese Government spontaneously declared full support to the HK $

With an attractive P-E ratio, $ 85 billion of reserves, no debt, and the promise from China that she is willing to dip into her $ 128 billion in reserves to support the peg as well, the Hong Kong forex market seems impregnable, Sudden unloading of stocks is nonetheless based on one of the two reasons either the economy will suffer from the overvalued HK $ following the devaluations of other currencies in the region, or the authorities will lack the resolve, like that of Thailand, to hold the exchange rate

In any case, the speculators are now testing the 14-year old peg of the HK $ If the peg crumbles, China will be humiliated for its failure to maintain the peg in less than six months after taking charge of the former colony and the effect on sentiment and confidence will be left throughout the world The economics and politics of the peg are therefore expected to reveal vital aspects of global dynamics.

The survival of the peg depends upon how the Hong Kong Monetary Authority reacts It should be noted that this Authority is different from other central banks It is not a central bank in the formal sense, and does not control money supply or move interest rates It holds one US dollar for every HK $ 7.78 issued in notes and coins If investors lose confidence in the HK $ and start withdrawing bank deposits, converting them into US dollars and transferring those dollars to distant lands, the authority simply buys bank notes and coins in US dollars at the pegged rate The banks losing deposits raise interest rates to arrest the deposit attrition In Hong Kong, interest rates rise automatically as investors switch out of local dollars. When the Hang Seng market tumbled on October 23 interest rates on overnight funds went as high as 300 per cent High interest rates generate recessionary impulses in industries and depress property values

The upshot is that the cost of maintaining the HK $ peg to China will be high interest rates, risking recession in Hong Kong High interest rates are painful for the property companies based in the UK that make up 60 per cent of the UK stock market Some of the biggest names in British industry and finance—HSBC Holdings (owner of Midland Bank), the biggest UK company by market capitalisation, Cables and Wireless Schroders—have seen their share prices tumble because of heavy exposure to Hong Kong investments Their earnings are adversely affected by the fall in property values in Hong Kong Besides, UK investment funds have significant exposures in Hong Kong The UK unit trust industry has 7 7 billion pounds of its investments in the Far East, excluding Japan, with about 2 75 billion pounds in Hong Kong The total exposure of pension funds in Hong Kong is estimated at 60 billion pounds

With such a heavy exposure of portfolio investments, 15 billion pounds of direct foreign investment, buying 10 per cent of her imports and selling seven per cent of her exports to the Far East British economy is likely to be hard hit by recession in Hong Kong To the Chinese it is a matter of preserving the honour (of course with an advantage of buying Hong Kong property at lower prices) to maintain 'two systems' in the brave new world conjured up by Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan and Arthur Laffer, but to the British it is a matter of saving its leading corporations

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THERE is no guarantee, however, that the Chinese intervention can save the HK $ peg It is worth recounting that unlike October 1929, the Black Monday of October 1987 was prevented to herald a global depression by the US Federal Reserve putting a brake on the financial markets Thus exports dramatically increased in 1988 But on Black Wednesday in 1992, when the sterling was pushed out of the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM), the Bank of England failed to defend the pound under attack from currency speculators, despite pursuing an extra tight monetary policy and using seven billion pounds in swap operations, one-third of its then reserves The attack on the pound was on a much smaller scale compared to the Black Monday of 1987 And yet the intervention of the BoE was unsuccessful because it failed to reverse the perceptions of the market operators like George Soros, who made a fortune at the cost of the BoE Ultimately England capitulated and withdrew from the ERM

Currency and stock values not in tune with economic reality are obviously shaped by markets The HK $ linked to the US dollar is now out of line with South-East Asian currencies just as the US dollar linked to gold was out of line with the world currencies during the late sixties At that time the dollar's latent weakness became apparent when the Central Bank of France started buying gold against its receipts of US dollars to change the composition of its reserves Gold prices continued to rise and the almighty dollar became vulnerable. As the dollar's tie with gold became politically embarrassing, Nixon broke the *golden anchor* of the dollar on August 15, 1971, bade goodbye to the Bretton Woods Agreement and ushered in the modern age of currency markets Thereafter the pressure on the dollar subsided but it sank against the yen from 360 in 1971 to 80 in 1995 and is now hovering at around 120 Just like the US dollar in 1971 the pressure on many South-East Asian currencies has proved irresistible in 1997 The Hong Kong dollar is now facing a formidable challenge from global fund managers With the Chinese devaluation in 1994, the Japanese devaluation in 1995, and the 'Asian Miracle' having apparently disappeared with several of its currencies already depreciated or their links with the US dollar becoming a growing liability, it will indeed be a new miracle if the Hong Kong dollar holds its ground

A systematic, though painful, adjustment is indeed underway in the international currency markets As the US dollar is losing its status of supreme international reserve currency, two emerging contenders are the Eurocurrency and the yen backed by countries whose share of world trade rival that of the US The Euro received a setback recently as the Labour Government in England kept out the sterling from the Euro for the time being During the 1990s the yen also weakened as the slide in Japanese asset values continued for six years But recently the yen has gained strength, garnering the confidence of the South-East Asian countries for a regional reserve currency status Growing competition from Chinese exports is, of course, precipitating the transition from the US dollar to the yen in South-East Asia for the time being It is, however, uncertain that the yen will become the reserve currency of the region In any case this triangular realignment of currencies provides an interesting context for the ongoing turmoil in the South-East Asian currencies and the financial markets

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WHATEVER currency alignment emerges, three implications have to be reckoned with The first relates to the global stock market boom and the process of globalisation, the second is concerned with the role of the state and the progress towards a free market, and the third implication is with regard to the nature of rescue operations

What is the implication with respect to the ongoing process of globalisation? In many ways the financial panic on October 27, 1997 was similar to that on the Black Monday of October 19, 1987 Both were in a sense global and the declines on both occasions were substantial But their differences are more interesting than their similarities

On the Black Monday of 1987 the panic started in the New York Stock Exchange and subsequently it spilled over to the Far East On the Black Thursday of 1997 the panic started in Hong Kong and it was rapidly transmitted to the European and American stock markets As a matter of fact even the panic in Hong Kong was a consequence of the debacle in Thailand that had already engulfed the South-East Asian countries four months earlier In 1987 the crisis of confidence moved from New York to the Far East, in 1997 it originated in Thailand and moved to New York In 1987, the dog was wagging the tail, in 1997, it was as if the tail was wagging the dog

Interestingly, the geographical spread of the current crisis was in reverse order to that of globalisation in Asia. Globalisation supported by national forces supposedly created a 'miraculous' boom in Asian countries during the 1980s The Asian Miracle consisted of the high growth economies of South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan which received foreign capital from Japan and the US during the first half of the 1980s They were called the first tier of Asia's Newly Industrialised Countries (NICs) The growth impulses then spread to the second tier of the NICs—Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines—which grew at rapid rates from 1985 to 1995 Compared to this process of globalisation the crisis of confidence in 1997 was globalised in the reverse order It was the second tier of the NICs, the latest to embellish globalisation, whose stocks and currencies lost value during the summer this year Four months later, in autumn, the first tier of the NICs were unexpectedly battered And the collapse of confidence was not confined to the Asian NICs, it was global Stock markets in Japan, Europe and America plunged dramatically

It seems that globalisation has reached a dead end in 1997 If the Black Monday of 1987 was a tragedy of New York, the Black Thursday of 1997 has apparently become the tragedy of globalisation

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WHAT about the role of the state vis-a-vis the market? Clearly the recent crisis has shocked some of the South-East Asian countries beyond expectations Mahatir has stated that it is a shock which none can ignore But he is not alone in holding such a view In this context an important change in the views of persons who matter in global policy-making needs to be noted When speculative raids destroyed $ 19 billion of Thai reserves during the last summer, some

Western ideologues dubbed that as a Thai crisis to be covered by Thailand or by Japan whose loans and investments were at stake It was, of course, a different matter that three years ago those wise men had called the Mexican crisis a (global) systemic one, thereby implicating the international institutions of their responsibility to tide over that crisis But in less than four months of maligned indifference they found to their utter dismay that the distant Thai crisis which they had dismissed had snowballed into a global crisis and it was knocking at their doorstep

The Federal Reserve Chairman, Alan Greenspan, still regards domestic problems as the basic causes of currency turmoil in South-East Asia, but he has conceded now that international presence of the type of IMF package is necessary

Provoked by the speculative attack on the HK $ on October 23, the liberal Nobel Laureate, Paul Samuelson, wrote an article entitled "Even the Mighty can Fall" where he remarked that America and England in 1929-33, Japan in 1990-97 (during Tokyo's relentless slide in stock prices, property values, and output) and South-East Asia only recently, all confirmed that no government or central bank can be indifferent to the irrational vast swing in securities and real estate prices.

The authorities in Asia are likely to consider seriously ways and means to regulate such speculations and reorient their economies to the internal resource base

There is, of course, another factor that might provoke the regulation of markets With devaluations of Asian currencies their exports in Europe and America are likely to increase, intensifying the problem of unemployment in France and Britain and deepening the trade deficit in the United States Some experts have projected the US trade deficit to increase to $ 300 billion in 1998 from $ 191 billion in 1996 and the US growth to decline by 0 4 per cent They have already scaled down the growth of Europe by 0.3 per cent and of Japan by one per cent If this scenario crystallises, it has a potential to trigger protectionist tendencies in the world

In brief, the events of October 1997 have signalled the end of the global bull market, or even more significantly, the end of progress towards a free market

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THE third implication is still more interesting. How can such a panic be avoided in future? The scenario that has unfolded in the South-East Asian countries is a classic case of business cycle with foreign investment and lending taking the leading role. During the 1980s the spectacular growth of demand for foreign goods by the United States indicated by her growing trade deficit coupled with the mounting savings of Japan that found outlet, even in driblets, to South-East Asia created an economic boom first in the first tier and then in the second tier of the NICs

When bullish expectations were reversed as a result of Chinese and Japanese devaluations a period of distress followed As all expectations converged that markets were overpriced, there was a rush from real or less liquid financial assets into money Under these conditions if there is a fear that it may be impossible to liquidate the now-unwanted assets rapidly, there may be a panic, rather like that of a crowd in a theatre fire trying to get out through a narrow set of doors It is universally recognised that such a panic is disastrous and that it can be halted by a lender of last resort, who makes money freely available against sound assets

But as Charles Kindleberger asserts, there are two problems with respect to rescue operations First, the lender-of-last-resort function is well understood and technically well-organised within countries Secondly, there is a danger at both national and international levels Rescue operations have inevitably a political dimension who is saved, when, and under what conditions

Under the fixed exchange rate regime the IMF was supposed to lend to cover the short-term, temporary balance of payments deficit so as to maintain a currency's exchange rate Under the floating exchange rate regime the IMF cannot serve as an international lender of last resort because its decision-making process takes weeks, when decisions may have to be taken in hours. If, however, the crisis erupts in countries where the US involvement is marginal, the decision may be delayed even beyond weeks, owing to maligned indifference In the case of the 1994 Mexican crisis the US promptly suggested a comprehensive bail-out package but in the case of Thailand the IMF procrastinated until the Japanese, whose involvement in the Asian contagion was significant, asserted decisively

Moreover, the rescue packages are now big and their purpose is not to maintain the balance of payments deficit but to protect the interests of local elites or foreign enterprises which are faced with sudden losses More than fifteen years ago Britain borrowed $ 3 billion and India SDR 5 billion which provided a strong lever to the IMF to determine their monetary and fiscal policies Those loans now look very small in comparison to the Mexican bail out in 1994 and the rescue packages for Thailand ($ 17.3

(Continued on page 42)

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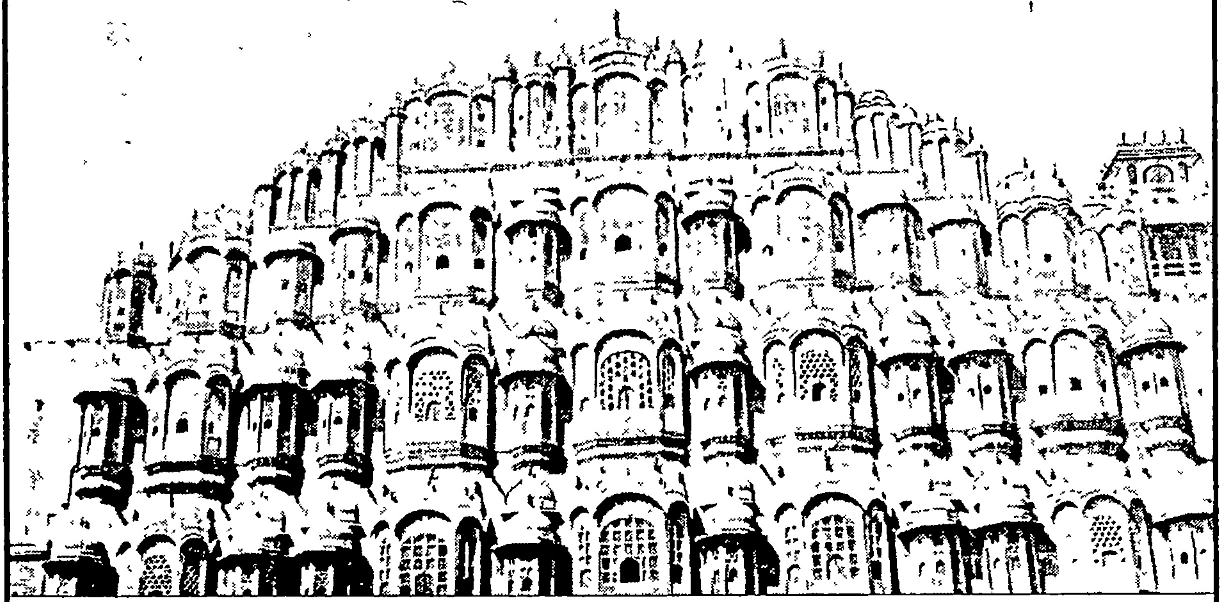

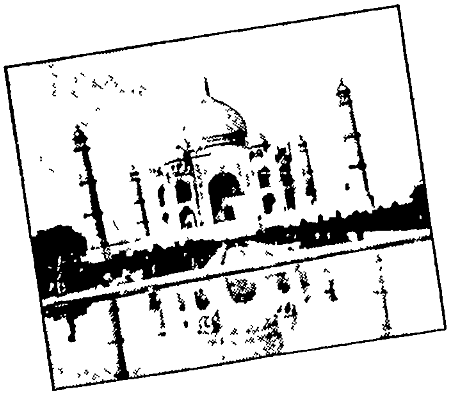

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New Directions in South Asian Media Laws

JAVED JABBAR

Significant trends towards a more liberal and reasonable environment for the mass media in South Asia have become evident in recent times These trends have to be given an enduring character by appropriate action on several fronts This consensus emerged from a regional workshop on "Harmonisation of Mass Media Laws in South Asia" held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on September 10-11, 1997 The gathering of lawyers, legal scholars, mass communication specialists and media educators was organised by the German Foundation Friedrich Ebert Stiftung and supported by the South Asian Media Association

The participants included the compilers and authors of books on mass media laws and regulations of five South Asian countries—Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka—published by the Asian Media Information and Communication Centre, Singapore and UNESCO Barrister Qazi Faez Isa and this writer, who are the co-compilers of the monograph on Pakistan, participated in this workshop The first of these workshops was convened in August 1996 in Kathmandu, Nepal, during which a comparative basis for such laws was established for the first time In Colombo, the participants agreed upon the following conclusions

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THE period 1996-97 in South Asia in terms of mass media law has witnessed some positive and purposive change with the repeal/proposed repeal of bad laws, the temporary promulgation of innovative new laws, the belated but welcome notification of enforcement of a law previously enacted and the initiation of the process to formulate improved, new frameworks for mass media laws

In 1996, Bangladesh repealed the Dramatic Performances Act of 1861, thus liberating stage productions from censorship control by Magistrates

India has enforced the Prasar Bharati Act with effect from September 15, 1997 which was originally enacted in 1991 but for which a notification had not been issued to date The Act provides for the autonomy of All-India Radio and Doordarshan

The author, a former Senator of Pakistan, has held the portfolios of Minister of Information and Minister of Petroleum and Natural Resources in our neighbouring north-western state

Nepal has issued earlier this year the first-ever license to a private FM radio station to be operated by a coalition of development NGOs

The caretaker government in office in Pakistan upto February 17, 1997 promulgated the Electronic Media Regulatory Authority Ordinance, 1997 which defines an open and transparent process for the introduction of new electronic media Even though the Ordinance lapsed on June 14, 1997, it is expected that the law will be enacted as an Act by Parliament shortly

In September 1997, the Parliament of Sri Lanka repealed provisions of the Parliamentary Powers and Privileges Act, to eliminate the power of Parliament to impose punishments on journalists

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HOWEVER, there is need to accelerate the speed of change in view of the urgency for institutional reform of the mass media and the need for new frameworks that respond to the advent of new communication technologies.

In increasing the speed and the quality of mass media legislation, certain actions and safeguards need to be ensured by respective governments, legislatures and media

— The degree to which national interest and cultural identity are adversely affected by foreign ownership and control of mass media in South Asian countries

— The concentration of undue and unhealthy media power through cross-media ownership which may prevent diversity of viewpoints from being expressed and obstruct open competition

— Legislation should help in defining the basis of how new convergencies in media technology can best be used to broad-base participation of all relevant groups in society in order to optimise the benefits of new technologies for those most in need, such as the poor and the disadvantaged

— Urgency for legislation should not prevent the proposed new laws and amendments from first being fully debated in the Press and media and public opinion being consulted before Parliament proceeds for enactment Even in well-established democratic societies, with long tradition of legislative actions, proposed new laws, particularly those dealing with the mass media, are always circulated for public opinion outside Parliament before being enacted into law

— In view of the low level of access by people to the mass media in South Asia, governments should formulate and implement such policies and offer such commercial incentives that the mass media become more easily accessible to those in the middle and low income groups which constitute the majority of the populations The governments should introduce legislative measures that increase the choices for sources of news available to citizens in all the mass media, particuiarly radio and TV

— While governmental institutions and media organisations are active in the respective countries of South Asia, there is an absence of independent citizen-based organisations devoted to the observation and analysis of mass media content and to the task of monitoring media-related policies and issues from a public-interest viewpoint To make possible the expression of citizens' perspectives on mass media issues in a manner and form that is not dependent for dissemination on either the mass media alone or governments alone, there is a need to build new forums and coalitions that will serve as citizens' media commissions An equally important objective to be fulfilled by such citizens' media organisations is to reinforce freedom of expression, to strengthen the process of open debate and the principles of accountability

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EFFORTS need to be made to introduce legislative, organisational and policy measures that strengthen the capacity of communities to own and/or operate their own local media, to participate in the shaping of the media content and enable the articulation of the community's perceptions

There is a need for regular publication on an annual or bi-annual basis of data on the mass media in South Asia This may be achieved either by seeking inclusion in existing publications such as the Annual Human Development Report on South Asia or in initiating the publication of an entirely new document on this subject

In government-controlled media, as well as in the private sector media, the public service dimension of their content needs to be ensured through legislative measures in order to obligate the mass media to fulfil minimal requirements of social and development priority

The monographs compiled on mass media laws and regulations in five South Asian countries—Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka—need to be made available and circulated to relevant groups and sectors in South Asia on a more visible and effective basis

The subject of mass media laws should be made part of the curriculum of general law studies in the law colleges and universities of the South Asian countries

In order to prevent the proprietarial dimension from distorting balance and fairness in the content of the mass media, there is a need to strengthen editorial independence and institutions and practices which represent editorial independence, both in the electronic media and print media

A draft text of a "Declaration on Freedom of Expression in Mass Media in South Asia" will be circulated during 1998 to all relevant media organisations and eminent individuals in order to achieve a consensus text. Such a declaration could eventually become a frame of reference within which policies, laws, and actions with regard to the mass media in the region may be judged ■

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C.B MUTHAMMA. Legislative Majority

(Continued from page 31)

India is truly the prisoner of the legislative majority It is a moot question as to how long the country can stumble along in this manner The multifarious evils bred by the need for a standing legislative-party majority cannot be legislated away There are plenty of laws against black money or criminal methods, but these do not prevent either black money or criminal deals especially when the system has a vested interest in both The evils are at every level from the electoral stage onwards, not merely at the legislative party-hopping level The only remedy is to remove the incentive and scope for wrong-doing This requires doing away with the need for a standing party majority, and turn to majorities on individual policies which can be voted down without bringing down the government. This presupposes a head of government directly elected to power by the people by an absolute majority The country needs to change from a politicians' majority to a people's majority as the best hope for the future ■

Communist Unity: Need for a Bold Initiative

SATYAPAL DANG

India today is undoubtedly one of the most corrupt countries in the world Corruption prevails at all levels At the highest level, however, India may perhaps be ahead of any other country Criminalisation of politics and politicisation of criminals have attained great "heights" In the most populous State of India, a good many notorious criminals have been elevated to the post of Ministers, that is, rulers A former head of the BSF, Prakash Singh, is quite right when he says "Politics today is more of an underworld affair" There is a rapid growth of crimes against women including minor girls, a steep rise in accidents resulting in more and more deaths including of children, fires breaking out and taking heavy tolls as in Dabwali and Uphaar cinema of Delhi, etc etc. The total unconcern of our rulers regarding all this and much more is too obvious. When criminals have close links with politicians and even occupy the ruling seats, it is certain that people are in for much worse

Idealism, the desire to serve the people and even to make sacrifices, was once considered synonymous with the youth in our country It is no longer so Young people are not coming forward to join politics with the determination to clean and purify it A big section has fallen prey to consumerism Money and more money have become the objective of their lives Others say. "Politics has become dirty and it is better to keep out" They overlook the simple truth that some with brooms and determination need to enter the house full of dirt and filth to sweep off all the dirt The best amongst them take to genuine social service and constructive activities That is good but if politics became more and more bereft of any morals, such good work in any field will become well nigh impossible. Energy and enthusiasm are the hallmarks of the youth. For experience they have to look up to elders They need a lode-star and today they don't see any

Gone are the days when Communists used to attract the youth as the magnet draws the iron towards itself The reasons for this are many. One is that even while remaining really different from the non-Left parties, they too have been contaminated and are not taking effective steps to prevent the contamination Another is the fact that they are not a major factor in national politics and show no signs of growing They have travelled a long way from being votaries of principled politics to become seekers of short-term electoral gains even at the cost of the long-term interests of the country and its toiling people While we don't rule out principled common programmes even with the bourgeois parties at this stage of development of the Indian revolution, unprincipled alliances and adjustments are being forged when those should be shunned at any cost

The author, a veteran CPI leader of Punjab, is the most respected Communist leader in the State and has won national acclaim for his courageous fight against Khalistani terrorism-cum-secessionism A selfless Communist, he is a crusader for communist unity for several years

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WHAT is more, there is still much dogmatism in the Indian communist movement accompanied sometimes by anarchy. The youth is dissuaded also by the refusal of the Communists to overcome the 34-year old disunity in their ranks And this when the desire for communist unity is widespread amongst the rank- and-file A few years ago there was a seminar in Amritsar organised by the CPI-M I was invited to speak When I appealed for the CPI and CPI-M uniting into one single Communist Party, the applause that greeted the proposal was deafening, and that too from the predominantly CPI-M audience One of the topmost leaders of the CPI-M was the last speaker He referred to my views But all that he said was "I will not say anything Dang is free while I am bound by discipline" He did not put forward the CPI-M line that the basic differences between the two parties were still there and hence the formation of a single party was not possible There was no refutation of my view that there are more differences within the CPI-M as well as the CPI than between the official policies of the two parties

In October 1997, I attended the "Ghadari Babian de Mela" at Jalandhar Veteran Ghadar Party leader Bilga said in his speech.

> Our *mela* is a great success but that could not have been if all the Lefts had not worked together for that Making a successful revolution is a thousand times more difficult Can it be made without the Left in India being united?

The applause which met those words was indeed heart-warming At this very *mela*, I happened to get into some discussion with a rank-and-file Naxalite Here is what he said

> I say let us not bother for some time about the slogan given by Marx "Workers of the world, unite!" Let us also stop mouthing slogans about the need for unity of working class of India Let our one slogan be "Communists of India, unite!"

He added "If that succeeds almost everything we work for will follow."

The CPI stands for the unity of Communists in India on a principled basis. The CPI deserves praise for this However, it is to be regretted that the CPI leadership is hardly doing anything to realise this objective. I remember that some years ago when I was a member of its National Council, a kisan leader of the CPI opposed the slogan of merging the two Kisan Sabhas headed by the CPI-M and CPI on the ground that the leadership of the united AIKS would pass on to the hands of the CPI-M almost exclusively and we of the CPI would be nowhere No wonder the rank-and-file of almost all communist formations has come to believe that the vested interests of leaders in the leadership are the real hindrance to communist unity It is a pity that it should be so in the case of Communists who are supposed to be the most selfless of all politicians

To begin with, the CPI-M and CPI must merge into one single party on a principled basis overcoming the egos and prejudices as well as the desire to be the boss (or someone slightly inferior to the boss)

Will the Communists do that? They must—not only for their own sake but for the sake of the country

Of course, the Communists alone cannot save the country, even after they unite They will have to unite with Centrist forces—both the regional parties and the renovated Centrist parties at the national level The hope that Kesri would renovate the Congress was deemed to fail for the simple reason that Kesri's name has been associated with not just a few scams but he is also allegedly involved in a murder His main concern, therefore, has been to save himself more than to save his party The Janata Dal which once inspired great hopes is in a worse plight than the Congress Renovation of the degenerate Centrist parties is dependent upon the emergence of a strong united Communist Party of India Many had hoped that some Jyoti Basu or Indrajit Gupta would take the initiative on this score and give the clarion call for the unity of all Communists That has not happened till date Perhaps it is time for some bold initiative from the rank-and-file Let those who believe that the time is ripe for such an initiative put their heads together and work out a strategy ■

DALIP S SWAMY South-East Asia

(Continued from page 37)

billion), Indonesia, Malaysia and South Korea (where the Finance Minister has been changed and the rescue package is expected to be around $ 40 billion)

Recently Malaysia soft-pedalled the IMF conditions Thailand promised but in practice her political and economic reforms dissolved in farce Indonesians are expected to reject the IMF package as they are getting $ 10 billion from Singapore and $ 1 billion from Malaysia Suharto is resenting the IMF's assessment which relates Indonesia's woes to the President's family and friends, who have a finger in every creamy (or murky) pie The IMF wants the 35-year old President's youngest son, Tommy Suharto, who owns the $ 600 million Humpuss Company, to abandon his $ 1 3 billion 'national car' project Whatever the case, countries generally resent the loss of national autonomy with respect to economic policy

For all these reasons some Asian countries are interested in setting up an Asian Fund on the pattern of the IMF For the time being Japan is unwilling to assume the leadership in this respect as her economic power is not sufficiently assuring Under the circumstances South-East Asia is faced with a dilemma. the US is incapable, and Japan is unwilling to act as a lender of last resort In this vacuum of decision-making, instability of stock markets and exchange rates is expected to continue for some time

The moral for India is clear this is no time for putting in place capital account convertibility The world currencies are in turmoil, until currency realignments are completed, capital flows will remain unpredictably volatile The RBI is doing well to keep inflation down which makes our exports competitive and provides an opportunity to accumulate genuine forex reserves, other than hot forex money It also provides opportunity to initiate an expansionary fiscal policy to narrow the infrastructural gaps that have grown over the globalising years The inward-looking policies are the safest bet in a world constantly and unpredictably threatened by powerful external fund managers Keynes in the mid-thirties strongly advocated such a policy for England which at that time was perhaps the economic powerhouse of the world. Meanwhile the economy can be equipped with adequate economic shock absorbers which have been abandoned with the blind pursuit of globalisation

Responding to the current crisis in Hong Kong the Finance Minister of China, Liu Zhongli, said

> China must make sure that the necessary laws and directives are functioning properly before financial markets are fully opened

We should keep in mind that China attracts $ 40 billion of foreign capital on the basis of her internal strength without capital account convertibility ■

Development without Violence and Intolerance

RELEVANCE OF THE GANDHIAN PARADIGM TODAY

PC JOSHI

"We want to look the world in the face with calm and clear eyes even though the eyes of the world are blood shot today "

—M K Gandhi, August 8, 1942

"If you apply that message of tolerance not only to religion but to other activities of human life such as politics, economics and and science, you will find that it puts things in a different context It is a context which is not very much in evidence today in the world where differences of opinion are not liked, where the tendency is to suppress the view, the opinion, or the way of life that is not approved of, where ultimately science itself becomes vitiated by a narrow outlook

"This would have been bad enough at any time, but when we have the new weapons forged by the work of the scientists hovering over us, then it becomes far more important and vital how people think today, how they react to other people's thinking, whether their minds are full of hatred and violence and intolerance, or whether they are growing in tolerance and in the appreciation of others "

—Jawaharlal Nehru,
Speech at the Science Congress,
Calcutta, January 14, 1957

We must make the basic premises of our approach explicit at the very beginning This requires a certain clarity about the very concept of tolerance Tolerance can be understood as a primary value, to be preserved and pursued for its own sake But it has also an instrumental dimension, it can be harnessed as a means to an end. As an instrumental variable, tolerance is amenable to diverse interpretations and uses In an unjust social order and an iniquitous economic order, tolerance has performed, and still performs, an ideological function It can be used by the strong to impose their domination on the weak and to secure their submission to this domination through the doctrine of tolerance In his *The Discovery of India* Jawaharlal Nehru had taken note of "this injurious side" of tolerance and of its role in ensuring the oppression of the weak by the strong Nehru's remarks quoted below have great relevance for our present-day discussion on tolerance

> Another curious fact seems to stand out The extreme tolerance of every kind of belief and practice, every suspicion and folly, had its injurious side also, for this perpetuated many an evil custom and prevented people from getting rid of the traditional burdens that prevented growth The growing priesthood exploited this situation to their own advantage and built up their powerful vested interests on the foundations of the superstitions of the masses (Jawaharlal Nehru 1956 84)

The author is an eminent social scientist with rich experience in studies on India's agrarian economy

In the light of the above we must clearly state that our meaning of tolerance allows for the legitimacy of the intolerance of the oppressed Tolerance must not mean that the weak should accept the regime under which they are kept ignorant, poor and weak by the strong They have a right to resist such a regime primarily through constitutional means but also through extra-constitutional methods if no other option is left open As social scientists, it is our duty to bring to light the ideological function performed by the doctrine of tolerance at all times and in all ages, it is also our duty to bring to light the bias agianst the weak and the downtrodden inherent in the doctrine of tolerance which had served very often as an ideological tool of the strong and the powerful

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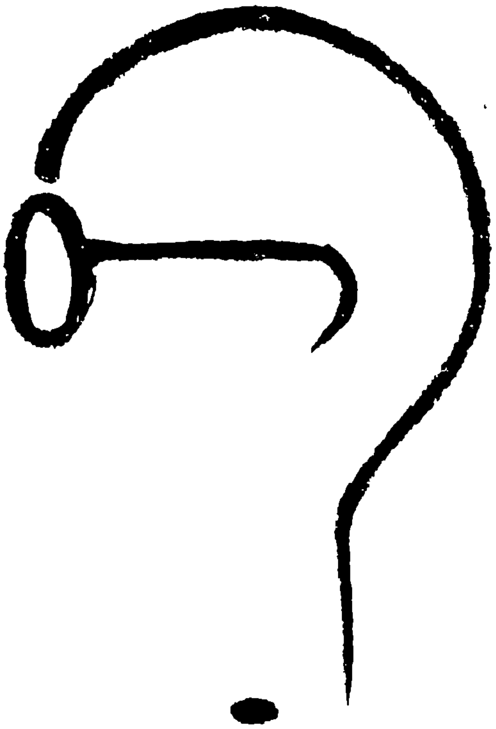
WHILE preparing for the International Year of Tolerance and while formulating a statement of principles and a plan of action, we shall be drawing upon the message and the living examples of the great sages and saints, philosophers and philosopher-kings in all countries and civilisations who were apostles of tolerance and who transformed tolerance from a mere idea into a moral force But we should also not forget to examine why intolerance always had an edge over tolerance throughout the history of mankind, and why, despite the martyrdom of great apostles of tolerance, the cult of intolerance had triumphed so often over their message of tolerance We must also frankly admit that scientific enquiry had not yet provided insights into the social and politico-economic roots of intolerance and the socio-economic possibilities of promoting tolerance It had also not provided fuller illumination into the nexus *between what happens within human minds and souls and what happens in the realm of political and social economy* In other words, the pursuit of tolerance has not been adequately linked to the attempt to alter the politicio-economic conditions which had in the past predisposed humankind towards intolerance Without a



He believed that freedom is all about the power of people

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CONCEPT

sociological and a politico-economic perspective, therefore, the pursuit of tolerance would remain unconnected with a meaningful strategy or programme of creating a tolerance-friendly political and economic environment

We must remember that some of the immortal apostles of tolerance like Mahatma Gandhi were also the apostles of *satyagraha* (that is, non-violent non-cooperation) against oppressive political and economic regimes In fact, Gandhi had very clearly stated that if he had to choose between cowardice (that is, submission to oppression) and violence (rebellion against oppression even through violence) he would choose the latter In fact, in his latest work, *A Portrait of Gandhi*, Rajmohan Gandhi had clearly stated that

> Gandhi is nonetheless willing to test violence and non-violence on the ground of effectiveness, and also to distinguish in his mind and publicly between thoughtless and thoughtful violence, between foolhardiness and mutiny that answered a call from a revolutionary party (Rajmohan Gandhi 1995 7-8)

It is obvious that for Gandhi 'intolerance' (violent but thoughtful rebellion) was a lesser evil than 'tolerance' in the sense of cowardly compliance to an illegitimate political authority or an oppressive economic system According to Gandhi, oppression and inequity had always provided the soil in which mental violence (that is, intolerance) had thrived Gandhi who had stood like a rock against the forces of violence (intolerance) had also called for non-cooperation against

> the Satanic system, which if it cannot be mended, must be ended

Thus great sages like Gandhi who had stood for non-violence (tolerance) had recognised the explosive potential for violence that was inherent in the unresolved economic problem and specially in the iniquitous and oppressive economic institutions and ideologies They had, therefore, regarded the resolution of economic conflicts and the removal of economic inequity and oppression as a necessary condition for promoting a climate of tolerance In other words, for Gandhi the question of 'tolerance' (that is, 'mental non-violence') was not just a moral and an ethical question It was at the same time a politico-economic issue of philosophical as well as praxeological significance An attempt to bring about a change in the moral outlook and the ethical attitude had no prospect of success in the absence of the concurrent attempt to bring about a change in the politico-economic basis of social existence When confronted with the outbursts of violence in Noakhali and other areas, Gandhi did not regard them as communal in essence on the basis of their outward appearance Gandhi's view was that

> the real cleavage as he saw it was not communal but economic (N K Bose 1974 23)

In other words, the roots of violence (that is, intolerance) were economic, and any lasting result in terms of eradicating violence could not be achieved if 'intolerance' ('violence') was treated only as a mental or a moral aberration It had to be treated as the product of an *economic* situation which predisposed people towards intolerance (that is, violence) rather than tolerance (that is, non-violence) Gandhi's integral view of the human condition, therefore, put as high a premium on 'economic reform' as it did on 'moral reform' To put it in simple terms, the removal of economic cleavages was a necessary condition for creating a tolerance-friendly ethos and environment

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If Gandhi as the apostle of tolerance (non-violence) recognised that the question of tolerance was as much a politico-economic question as it was a moral question, great politico-economic philosophers and political revolutionaries from Marx onwards had also recognised that in grappling with the issue of politico-economic transformatin one was confronted with issues of a moral and ethical nature Marx who gave theoretical expression to class struggle as the motive force of historical change had also conceded in his *Communist Manifesto* that class struggles had often led to "the common ruin of the contending classes" and not "to the revolutionary reconstitution of society at large" (Karl Marx 1955 34)

Marx had hoped that the science of political economy and the theory of revolution derived from it would contribute to "the creative" resolution of class conflict and would help in avoiding the path of the "common ruin of the contending classes" In other words, according to Marx, with the aid of political economy and the revolutionary theory derived from it, the oppressed classes of today would escape the tragic consequences suffered by them in the past which had resulted from the transition of one type of class rule to another Instead, they would be able to avoid wasting their energies in senseless class hatred and violence, and in creating conditions for the end of their own class oppression they would be creating conditions for the emancipation of all segments of mankind

According to the original vision of the young Marx, a politico-economic revolution would also mean the moral rebirth or moral regeneration of the entire mankind By creating conditions for the abolition of his 'class' nature, a politico-economic revolution would create for man the conditions for the restoration of his 'human essence'

It must be added that Lenin who gave practical expression to Marx's revolutionary vision had also distinguished between reckless class war (*Left Wing Communism—An Infantile Disorder*) and wisely directed class war (that is, a revolution) as a creative release of locked up social energies Philosophically and theoretically the most sophisticated attempt to raise the issue of class struggle from its primitive, elemental, 'economic-corporate' phase to a qualitatively higher 'politico-ethical' phase was provided by Gramsci's concept of "hegemony" This new concept had sought to elevate the subaltern classes, the victims of class domination and oppression, to the stature of "an autonomous and hegemonic force" which was capable of imparting a new and creative direction to social development which also heralded the birth of a new moral and intellectual order. (Antonio Gramsci 1971 335-388)

Having acquired a new consciousness of the "social roots of one's misery and oppression" through the aid of revolutionary philosophy and theory, the subaltern classes were able to sublimate their self-destructive hatred and indignation against the ruling classes into a creative, moral and intellectual force This had equipped them not only for the negative task of overthrowing the old order but fr the more positive task of constructing a new moral order As indicated by Marx, 'poverty' was thus transformed into a revolutionary force and class hatred into a creative stimulus for the cognition of the very dynamics of social change

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WHAT I have been trying to emphasise is that if Gandhi and the thoughtful Gandhians were aware of the political basis of the moral problem, Marx and the thoughtful Marxists were equally aware of the moral basis of economic cleavages. If there was an economic vision underlying Gandhi's view of moral reformation, there was also a moral vision underlying the economic approach and strategy of Marx and the later Marxists It should also be appreciated that if the later Gandhians had missed the original Gandhian premise of creating economic pre-conditions for moral reform, the later Marxists also missed Marx's original premise of resolving the economic cleavage with reference to a larger moral vision or perspective

Let us examine further Marx's exposition of the moral problem created by the transition from a relatively undifferentiated human 'community' into a class divided society

In one his early writings entitled *Wage, Labour and Capital*, Marx had illustrated through a very simple example how the appearance of a "palace" by the side of a "hut" had set in motion vast changes in the direction of economic polarisation which had disrupted community cohesion and solidarity, turned man against man and created an environment in which not the spirit of tolerance and harmony but that of intolerance and hatred ruled the roost In a very perceptive passage Marx had stated

> A house may be large or small, as long as the surrounding houses are equally small, it satisfies all social needs for a dwelling But let a palace raise beside the little house, and it shrinks from a little house to a hut The little house shows now that its owner has only very slight or no demands to make, and however high it may shoot up in the course of civilisation, if the neighbouring palace grows to an equal or greater extent, the occupant of the relatively small house will feel more and more uncomfortable, dissatisfied, and crumpled within its four walls
>
> Our desires and pleasures spring from society, we measure them therefore by society and not by the objects which serve for their satisfaction Because they are of a social nature, they are of a relative nature (Karl Marx 1970 83)

It is clear from above that the polarisation between the "hut" and the "palace" was not part of any "natural" scheme of things, it arose from *social* and not *natural* causes Similarly, the division between the "hut dwellers" and the "palace owners" also arose out of social and not natural causes In the past "the hut" might have tolerated the rise of the "palace" under conditions of ignorance or under compulsions of power and force But the rise of the "palace" was instrumental in creating vast churning among the "hut dwellers", ultimtely eroding the basis of tolerance and sowing the seeds of envy, dissatisfaction and intolerance

That the contrast between the "hut" and the "palace" existing side by side had inherent in it an explosive potential for intolerance and violence was grasped both by Marx who was wedded to a violent revolution and by Gandhi who was the apostle of a non-violent revolution In a very perceptive economic statement on the issue of equality made in 1948, Gandhi had also remarked on the serious implications of this contrast betwen "the palaces of New Delhi and the miserable hovels of the labouring class nearby". To quote

> A non-violent system (based on the ethic of tolerance) is clearly an impossibility so long as the wide gulf between the rich and the hungry millions persists The contrast between the palaces of New Delhi and the miserable hovels of the poor labouring class nearby cannot last one day in a free India in which the poor will enjoy the same power as the richest in the land A violent and bloody revolution is a certainty one day unless there is a voluntary abdication of riches and the power that riches give and sharing them for the common good (M K Gandhi 1966 88)

It must be noted that Marx's fundamental insight into the economic roots of the distorted human condition and into the economic possibilities of alterning the human conditions in the desired way was as valid today as it was in his own lifetime Even though Gandhi's thinking was not primarily focussed on the economic dimension of the human condition but on its moral-ethical dimension, Gandhi had also grasped *intuitively* the influence exercised by the economic factor on the human condition what Marx had grasped *theoretically* What our times truly need is a synthesis of Gandhi's insight into the fundamental goodness of human nature and in the efficacy of tolerance (non-tolerance) as a method of conflict resolution with Marx's insight into the role of the economic factor in distorting human nature and of favourable changes in the economic factor for creating conditions of change in human nature

II

It must also be added that the world has changed much since the days of Marx and Gandhi There has also been an explosion of knowledge about *man's relation with man, about the man-nature nexus and about the new technological possibilities of abolishing class division and polarisation and restoring community cohesion and solidarity* Similarly, our understanding of the institutional or systemc constraints in utilising available knowledge for creating a better society in which tolerance and not intolerance will thrive has also made great strides We have also acquired better historical insights into what type of economic and ecological conditions had sustained the ethos of tolerance and what other type of conditions had allowed scope for the predatory and aggressive instincts and tendencies

On the basis of our knowledge of history we could even advance an ecological and economic interpretation of the phenomenon of tolerance It has been noted that civilisations which were located in regions like the great Indo-Gangetic plains where nature was excessively kind and where economic survival did not necessitate predation and aggression were characterised by the values, habits, symbols and the way of life oriented to tolerance Alternatively, when man had to confront not nature's bounty but its niggardliness, the severe economic constraint had encouraged the predatory tendency and instinct, it had thwarted the impulses of kindness and tolerance This had been the history of man engaged in the struggle for existence under severe constraints imposed by primative technology and primative knowledge in pre-modern times and in the pre-scientific ages

With the onset of the modern age, the age of modern science and technology, had begun an age of wonders and paradoxes The modern age at once cleared the way for the "Wealth of Nations" via the route of economic enterprise combined with aggressive colonialism (that is, intolerance) on a world scale But it had also created the prospect of eliminating economc scarcity for every member of the human race and of making predation and aggression not only undesirable but also unnecessary Why had this latter possibilty not fructified and why did predation and aggression (that is, intolerance) gain such a strong hold on the human mind and on human behaviour even in the scientific age? This required a scientific explanation An adequate understanding of the aggravation of intolerance even in the post-modern world was the intellectual challenge of our times It called for a creative response specially during this International Year of Tolerance and the 125th year of Gandhi's birth.

◆

Let us examine some of the implications of the pursuit of tolerance in the context of today but in the light of lessons from the past Let us begin with two insightful observations, one from M K Gandhi and another from an eminent scientist, A N Whitehead Both of them had expressed concern about the human condition during the early period of this century These concerns are still with us, they are very much akin to our concerns during the closing years of this century and specially during this International Year of Tolerance which coincides with the 125th birth anniversary of the Mahatma

In a major speech at Muir College Economics Society at Allahabad, on December 25, 1916, Gandhi had made certain perceptive remarks which are extremely relevant in the context of our present predicaments Gandhi had remarked

> We have to make our choice, Western nations today are groaning under the heel of the monster-god of materialism Their moral growth has become stunted They measure their progress in £ s d American wealth has become standard She is the envy of the other nations I have heard many of our countrymen say that we will gain American wealth but avoid its methods I venture to suggest that such an attempt if it were made is foredoomed to failure (M K Gandhi in Raghavan Iyer 1993 97)

In a similar strain A N Whitehead, the eminent scientific philosopher, had identified the basic moral malady of the modern civilisation in the following words

> The materialistic philosophy emphasised the given quantity of material, and thence derivatively the given nature of the environment It thus operated most unfortunately upon the social conscience of mankind For it directed almost exclusive attention to the aspect of struggle of existence in a fixed environment
>
> But during the last three generations the exclusive attention to this aspect of things has been a disaster of the first magnitude The watchwords of the nineteenth century have been, struggle for existence, competition, class warfare, commercial antagonism between nations and military warfare *The struggle for existence has been construed into a Gospel of Hate* The full conclusion to be drawn from a philosophy of evolution is fortunately of a more balanced character Successful organisms modify their environment Those organisms are successful which modify their environment so as to assist each other This law is exemplified in nature on a vast scale Every organism requires an environment of friends, partly to shield it from violent changes and partly to supply it with its wants The Gospel of Hate and of Force is incompatible with a social life (A N Whitehead 1926 237-238)

In the context of the observations made by A N Whitehead, it is pertinent to refer to the thoughts of a great scientist, sociologist and philosopher, Prince Petr Kropotkin who had in his major work, *Mutual Aid* (1939), sharply focussed on the complete neglect of the role that 'the mutual-aid factor' had played in natural and social evolution In Kropotkin's view,

> the mutual-aid factor had been hitherto totally lost sight of, it was simply denied, or even scoffed at by the writers of the present and past generation

Further,

> it was therefore necessary to show, first of all, the immense part this factor plays in the evolution of both the animal world and the human societies (Prince Petr Kropotkin 1939 231-232)

Prince Kropotkin had concluded his major work on the following positive note

> In the practice of mutual-aid, which we can trace to the earliest beginnings of evolution, we thus find the positive and undoubted origin of our ethical conceptions, and we can affirm that in the ethical progress of man, mutual support—not mutual struggle—has had the leading part In its wide extension, even at the present time, we also see the best guarantee of a still loftier evolution of our race (Prince Kropotkin 1939 234)

Social scientists have yet to examine the full implications of Prince Kropotkin's insight into the much greater role that mutual aid as against mutual struggle had played in human evolution and into the still untapped possibilities of tapping the 'mutual-aid factor' for human progress in future Prince Kropotkin had not provided the full explanation of why the 'mutual struggle factor' had been exaggerated and the 'mutual-aid factor' had been vastly underrated

We find a clue to this riddle in the reflections of another great scientist, Charles Sherrington, who in his major work, *Man on His Nature* (1953), had demonstrated how in man's own nature one found the clash of 'predatory instincts' on the one hand and altruistic impulses on the other Sherrington had remarked

> The mill that man had been through ground out its products in the main by retaining above all the interests of the 'self' He was a successful product of that process The contradiction is that he is slowly drawing from life the inference that altruism, charity, is a duty incumbent upon thinking life That an aim of conscious conduct must be the unselfish life But that is to disapprove the very means which brought him hither and maintains him Of all his new found values perhaps *altruism* will be the most hard to grow The 'self' has been so long devoted to itself as an end A good man's egotism, it is said, is altruism Perhaps that indicates a stepping stone on the way (Charles Sherrington 1953 278)

◆

WE have reproduced above four significant passages The first is from Mahatma Gandhi who gave the message of non-violent resolution of conflicts to the world, the second from Whitehead, a leading scientist and scientific philosopher, who tried to interpret the major lesson of biological sciences in terms of rejection of the Gospel of Hate and the affirmation of the Principle of Cooperation (that is, tolerance) as exemplified in nature itself The third is from Prince Kropotkin, a revolutionary philosopher, who, like Whitehead, focussed on the role of the 'mutual-aid factor' in human evolution in the past and its vast potential for the future evolution of mankind The fourth passage is from Charles Sherrington who focussed on how the past human evolution centred on the 'self' had continued to thwart man's new journey spurred by the force of altruism We can see that the Gandhian insight and the Gandhian vision had the support of great scientists and sociologists

What Gandhi had grasped with the power of intuition, Whitehead had captured with the force of scientific insight and empirical knowledge Gandhi had called for resolving the conflict between man and nature, and between man and man by opting for *need* (sustainable development) and by opting out of *greed* (unsustainable development) Whitehead had also called for revising the obsolete Darwinian view of nature based on the Gospel of Hatred and on cut-throat competition He had presented an alternative view of nature

> as the triumph of the organisation of mutually dependent species (A N Whitehead 1926 239)

He had thus called for giving up "the limited moral outlook" of the prosperous classes of the formative age of industrialism In his view, this outlook was

> partly the result of the aesthetic errors of protestantism, partly the result of scientific materialism and partly the result of the abstractions of the political economy

The evils resulting from this outlook were not checked, and they had pervaded the entire Western civilisation and the civilisations of all those who emulated the West This had happened, according to Whitehead, because the middle classes at the head of the Western civilisation had

> refused to face the necessities of social reform imposed by the new industrial system and they were now refusing to face the *necessities of intellectual reform imposed by the new knowledge*

about nature and about humankind (A N Whitehead 1938 240)

The history of the past seven to eight decades following the writings of these great thinkers had confirmed that the correction of "the moral outlook" and "the reorientation of the economic thought and practice" on the basis of a corrected moral outlook suggested by them had gone by severe default What is worse, countries of the non-Western world which could have provided the ground for experiments based on the new moral outlook and the new economic vision had themselves started emulating in practice 'the limited moral outlook' and he flawed economic creed of the Western world

In the above background any dialogue on 'tolerance' which was prompted by the compulsions of the contemporary human conditions must also reckon with this legacy of the Great Default While it had made the new dialogue more compelling and urgent than ever before, it had also made it far more difficult and complex than we had imagined

III

WE must also note that the epoch-making changes in the human condition following the transition from the medieval to the modern age in the West were characterised by a great paradox While the age of intolerance came to an end, heralding the age of tolerance in the religious sphere, the reverse tendency was noted in the politico-economic sphere Here the age of economic tolerance had ended and the age of economic intolerance had begun with a vengeance

It is interesting to note that the new entrepreneurs heading the economic breakthrough in the West were also the active promoters of the climate of religious tolerance As recorded by R H Tawney,

> the new commercial classes were the most vocal in the demand for tolerance (R H Tawney 1948 206)

Even economists had applauded tolerance, Tawney remarked, "because it was good for trade", and also

> because persecution was incompatible with prosperity since it was on the pioneers of economic progress that persecution principally fell

But the same classes who promoted the regime of tolerance in the religious sphere also created conditions and supported the ideology of intolerance in the economic sphere This ideology had given currency to the notion that economic progress had resulted not from the pursuit of altruism and benevolence (that is, tolerance) but from the naked pursuit of self-interest (Joan Robinson 1970 53) Recall Adam Smith

> It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest We address ourselves not to their humanity but to their self-love (Joan Robinson 1970 53)

Thus classical political economy had prescribed tapping not the "higher side" of human nature (tolerance and kindness) but the "stronger side of human nature" (greed, covetousness and sense of rivalry) for achieving economic progress

The end of the Age of Inquisition had thus yielded place to the new politico-economic regimes practising intolerance on a world scale This was the Age of Capital which came *a la* Marx "dripping from head to foot with blood and dirt" and which had divided the great English nation heading the Industrial Revolution into two nations of rich and poor, locked in antagonism and confrontation against each other It was also the Age of Empire which divided the world into a minority of dominant Western nations and a majority of dominated peoples of the world The Age of Capital and the Age of Empire had provided free scope for the politics and economics of intolerance on a global scale

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THERE were, however, some redeeming features Firstly, those representing the moral conscience of mankind both among the dominated and the dominant nations had never reconciled themselves to this practice of the gospel of racial superiority and of the principle of survival of the fittest In their hands they had carried the torch of tolerance and the light from it had not allowed the hope for a tolerant and compassionate society to die out completely Secondly, some of the enlightened Western economists had indicated the possibilities of harmonising economics and morality through the unprecedented economic possibilities created by the new age of science and technology John Maynard Keynes, for instance, had made a distinction between the 'primary' and 'basic needs' of mankind which were 'satiable' and the secondary needs of 'status' and 'vanity' which were 'insatiable' It was now possible, according to Keynes, to satisfy the needs of the first kind which were required for man's survival and to liberate man from economic scarcity Man, liberated from economic anxiety, could now devote himself to improving the quality of his life and to pursuing non-economic goals This was the bright prospect which had been opened by economic growth for large parts of society in the Western world

Keynes, however, had warned that if these new economic possibilities were directed towards satisfying the secondary needs based on the desire for status and superiority, the vast economic potential created by science and technology would be misdirected It would be directed towards satisfying 'the voluptuousness' (Gandhi) of a part of mankind and not the basic 'needs' of the majority of mankind

In other words, it seemed for the first time that man had the capability to realise the dream of freedom from want and scarcity for the whole of mankind and to create the economic basis of a tolerant, compassionate society In a mood of optimism, Bertrand Russel had written

> Consider the immense diminution of cruelty in Britain during the Victorian Age, this was mainly due to rapidly increasing wealth of all classes I think we may confidently expect a similar effect throughout the world owing to the increased wealth that will result from the elimination of war (Bertrand Russell 1952 117)

But there had still existed a vast gap between vision and reality, between hope and fulfilment

The end of the Age of Empire and of the Age of Capital's unchallenged supremacy over the world, however, gave way to the age of Cold War—to the new era of ideological fanaticism, hatred and military confrontation between the Western and the Soviet blocks The age of ideological intolerance having the support of the most deadly weapons of mass destruction on either side had turned out to be far more vicious and pernicious in its far-reaching effects than the bygone era of religious intolerance We are now in the third phase when the enlightened elements in the Western world seem to realise the value of tolerance as the guiding principle of economic policy and practice, they are keen to translate this principle into a plan of action In sharp contrast to this, centres of intolerance seem to have shifted to our part of the globe The non-Western world which was known for its spirot of tolerance and compassion through the ages and which was expected to help "save mankind from destroying itself" (Arnold Toynbee 1962) had itself become the new arena of confrontation between the resurgent forces of intolerance and the retreating forces of tolerance and compassion

Noting this dramatic reversal of roles, Nehru had written about it in one of his letters to his daughter on June 30, 1932 He had said

> So religious toleration and freedom of conscience which were such marked features of old Indian life, slipped away from us to some extent, while Europeans caught upto us and then went ahead in establishing after many a struggle, these very principles (Jawaharlal Nehru 1939 233)

Nehru had also noted that in Europe those who were earlier breaking their heads over religious issues had now been breaking their heads over political and economic issues (Jawaharlal Nehru 1939)

Almost half a century has elapsed when Nehru had written about this marked shift towards an outlook of intolerance in India and other countries of the Third World This half a century had been marked by a change for the worse rather than for the better In fact, while the outlook of religious intolerance had struck deeper roots and spread from the 'classes' to the 'masses' the spirit of intolerance had encompassed other spheres This included the economic sphere which had earlier been marked by a spirit of harmony, accommodation and reconciliation

IV

THE question must be posed What explained this marked shift from tolerance to intolerance in the non-Western world? Was intolerance the vicious fruit of the early stages of economic progress as it was in the case of the West? Was it the logical corollary or consequence of the delayed transition from the medieval to the modern age which was now taking place in our part of the globe? Was it the inevitable consequence of the transition from the securities of the pre-industrial, rural environment to the insecurities and uncertainties of the emerging industrial urban environment? Was the growing discontent of the dispossessed and poverty-stricken masses acquiring the volcanic force of intolerance as the suffering from pre-existing poverty was being compounded with newly created insecurity and anxiety on a massive scale? There was enough empirical evidence in support of these propositions.

We find that the intolerance of the masses was also being intensified by the emergence of islands and enclaves of middle class affluence in the midst of the ocean of mass poverty and insecurity. We also find the middle classes of poor countries flaunting their wealth and affluence with all the vulgarity and ostentation characteristic of the *nouveau-riche* (Jan Breman 1994).

By their aggressive display of their newly acquired affluence, the middle classes invited the envy and the wrath (that is, the intolerance) of the deprived who also craved for the good things of life that were being glamourised day in and day out by the electronic media and the press. It had also been noted that a certain Puritanical restraint and austerity had characterised the Western pioneers of modernity and early non-Western followers of the West—the Puritans of England, the Jacobins of France, the New Frontier men of the USA, the Samurai of Japan and the Bolsheviks of Russia. This self-restraint and austerity had been completely absent in the case of the new middle classes of India and many other countries of the Third World. Perhaps it was this total absence of restraint and austerity and this total lack of sympathy and compassion for the underdog displayed by the new middle classes which was the major motivating factor behind the great turbulence among the poverty-stricken masses and behind their new mood of rebelliousness and intolerance. The elites who were seeking entry into the Western community of the affluent and who were seceding from their own community of the unprivileged and the poverty-stricken were providing easy targets for the masses whose tolerance was now reaching the breaking point.

It is easy to see that the vastly altered and contrasting background of the West and East today provided the answer to the paradox posed by the eminent Indian economist, Amiya K. Dasgupta. Dasgupta had asked why was it that the Gandhian message for tolerance had more adherents in the industrialised West than in the underdeveloped East? Why was it that the latter had adopted various versions of Marxism in the post-colonial era rather than of Gandhism so readily? Dasgupta had himself provided the following answer:

> May be that the suitable soil for a peaceful revolution to resolve class conflict, such as Gandhi envisaged, is an affluent society and not an immature one. It makes smooth going to settle on a plateau once you have climbed the hill, the journey upwards is arduous. (A.K. Dasgupta 1983: 92)

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THE final answer whether the journey to a new society will be on the path of tolerance or of intolerance lies perhaps with the middle classes—with the quality of their response to the challenges of the delayed transition to the modern age. What meaning will the new middle classes give to modernity and to economic growth? What meaning will they give to the concept of a good life? How will they resolve the conflicting pulls of their own culture and civilisation on the one hand and the pulls of the Western way of life on the other? How will they relate themselves to the larger community of the poor in whose midst they have to live and promote their own well-being? It is the response of the middle classes to these questions which will determine whether our entry into the twentyfirst century will open the doors of tolerance or intolerance, of our common survival or our common ruin.

The following passage from Arnold J. Toynbee confirms our own prognosis about the role of the new middle classes in determining the shape of things to come in the post-colonial and developing countries of the world. In Toynbee's assessment, the middle classes hold the key to the future, an assessment which corresponds to the prognosis made by Gandhi during the early years of India's independence. To quote:

> In the light of past experience, it is, I think, safe to say that, whenever and wherever the middle class tries to sit on the social safety-valve, it is going to bring on itself, sooner or later, the nemesis of being blown sky high. This is a barbarous denouement, and it is also an unprofitable one for siciety as a whole. Society cannot afford to eliminate the middle class, because this class possesses experience and skill that is indispensable to society, and this in all fields of activity. The alternative is for the middle class voluntarily to help the industrial and agricultural labouring class to attain the middle-class standard of living. (Arnold J. Toynbee 1962: 23)

Toynbee was presenting in a new form the same insight which was embodied in Gandhi's message for the middle classes in his Theory of Trusteeship and in his concept of adoption of voluntary poverty (that is restraint on greed) by the elite. ■

[This is a substantially revised paper the author originally presented to *The Asia and Pacific Regional Meeting on Tolerance* (New Delhi, May 1-4, 1995).]

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MUBASHIR HASAN **Perspective from Pakistan**

(Continued from page 18)

themselves into commercial or industrial elite As a reactionary force they have firmly blocked the path of progress and change

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A struggle has to be waged on political, social, cultural, economic and ideological fronts as one package In the political field, the most important attack needs to be launched at the nexus between the feudal lords and the apparatus of the state Right from villages and *mohallas* up to the state structure in Islamabad, the people have to be empowered In the social field the fight is to be carried under the flag of human rights In the realm of ideology the banner of feudalism used to be in the hands of the *mullah* who presented religion as a reactionary force According to the *mullah,* property is the gift of God and not the result of loot and plunder of the weak and oppressed But there is a change in the air Some religious political parties are slowly turning against the feudal

There can be no success in combating feudalism unless a successful battle is waged on the economic front Ownership of large tracts of land by the feudal is the fountainhead of his political and economic power Pakistan must have a new package of agrarian reform alongwith a people-powered machinery for its implementation

There should be extensive decentralisation of the coercive power of the state. Legislative, judicial and executive matters that can be resolved at a lower level should not require reference to the higher level in the decision-making hierarchy Transfer of power on a vast scale is required from the Central to the State/provincial level and further below to the levels of divisions, districts, cities, towns, villages, etc The empowerment of the people should mean that the big government exercising the coercive power of the state from a distant capital through a manipulatable bureaucracy, primarily interested in its salary and promotions, should be replaced by democratic institutions exercising jurisdiction over relatively much smaller territories, and which ensure

(a) protection of life and property,
(b) prompt and fair trial of criminal cases,
(c) transparent system of land record and of settlement of revenue and civil disputes,
(d) economic and efficient running of local health and educational facilities,
(e) maintenance and operation of local communications,
(f) ownership and management of state owned lands,
(g) supervisory powers over the operations of national and State service systems such as electrical power, irrigation, communications

Independent of the will of individuals, the mounting pressures of the forces of history will progressively weaken the shackles of the past and compel changes But the changes can be violent and fascistic in character We must give ourselves time and earn respite to canvass and adopt workable solutions that do not entail the use of violence We must decide against committing suicide Literally so ■

[Remarks made at the National Human Rights Convention of the Democratic Commission for Human Development (Islamabad, November 22, 1997)]

Panchayats and Personnel Policy

D. BANDYOPADHYAY

The Seventythird Constitutional Amendment has introduced a system of diarchy in governance in the district level and below Certain functions under the scheme of things would remain with the State Government Certain other functions would be devolved by the State Legislature to the Panchayats

Personnel is required to perform certain functions and discharge certain duties Hence, the personnel policy of the Panchayats can only be discussed in the context of powers, authority and responsibilities endowed to the Panchayats by the respective State Legislatures. Apparently, the personnel issue may look to be State-specific, but in fact it is not so Article 243-G authorises the Legislature of a State to enact laws for endowing the Panchayats with powers and authority But this enabling authority of the State Legislature is subject to an overarching non-negotiable condition to "enable them (panchayats) to function as institutions of self-government" Thus any attempt at a "sham" exercise of devolution of powers to the Panchayats would be unconstitutional This point has been largely overlooked in State legislation in an attempt to make the Panchayats subservient to the existing power structure to make them discharge some agency function There should be protest from the Panchayats all over the country against it and if necessary the courts should be moved to test such legislation on the grounds of constitutionality

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To be an institution of self-government means that the Panchayats have to be autonomous It is obvious that no unit of governance in a constitutional quasi-federal system can be fully autonomous in the strict sense of the term After the amendment

> there is now a five layered pyramid of governance rising from the village cluster to the Union at the apex At each level below the Union there has to be an appropriate measure of autonomy Thus self-government at a particular level means such partial autonomy as is appropriate for that level

But how would be the appropriateness of the partial autonomy be decided? What should be the principle? It should be the principle of "entitlement from below rather than endowment from above" Thus the GPs should be entitled by law to do what they can best do at their level, from the rest the BPs (Block Panchayats) should similarly be entitled to do whatever they can do best And the same for the ZPs The State Government should thereafter confine itself to such functions as are left over and need to be attended to only at the State level The State and the Centre should perform only the residual functions

One may call this proposition utopian but the Constitution deliberately uses the terminology of units of self-government in Article 40 and "an institution of self-government in Article 243 (d) and 243-G" Obviously these are not typographical errors or slips of pen The Constitution does mandate the Panchayats to become "institution of self-government" and no one can take away the autonomous character of the Panchayats excepting through a regressive constitutional amendment

Article 243-G envisages two types of functions for the Panchayats at each tier The first is the original function which is "preparation of plans for economic development and social justice" The agency functions relate to the

> implementation of schemes for economic development and social justice as may be entrusted to them including those in relation to the matters listed in the Eleventh Schedule

Thus the Panchayats are constitutionally mandated to prepare plans for economic development and social justice How does one read this clause? Is it that the Panchayats make one set of plans for economic development, which might accentuate social and economic inequality, maldistribution of resources in favour of the affluent depriving the non-affluent and then prepare another set of plans in respect social justice aiming at reducing the evil effects of plans for economic development? In fact that is the paradigm followed by the macro level planning process in India which simultaneously promoted economic growth and inequality of income and then almost as an afterthought under compulsion of electoral politics,

The author, a distinguished IAS officer (now retired), was the Secretary, Rural Development in the Union Government and thereafter worked in the Asian Development Bank as its Executive Director Earlier he played a pivotal role in the implementation of 'Operation Barga' in West Bengal where number counts prepared another set of plans and programmes for poverty alleviation. As a result, we have little over 36 per cent of the population below the poverty line, according to the latest estimate of 1994-95. Obviously, the intention of mandating the Panchayats to do planning function was to avoid that disastrous possibility at the micro level. Hence the clause has to be interpreted conjunctively, that is, that any plan for economic development must automatically enhance and/or promote social justice. It is easier said than done. After articulation of aspirations, demands and expectations of the people all the issues have to formally projectised to be integral part of the area plans of the GP, BP and ZP. Quite a lot of technical input would be required for it.

Here is a need for technical personnel to aid the Panchayats to perform their original function of preparation of plans for economic development and social justice.

Then there is the whole set of functions that could be delegated to the Panchayats under subclause (b) of Article 243-G. Items mentioned in the Eleventh Schedule are just indicative. There is no bar for any State Legislature devolving functions outside the Eleventh Schedule. In fact the artificial divide between development and general administration should be done away with and the earlier the better. This mind-set is at the root of the diarchy that has been established at the district level and below through the Seventythird Amendment. There is no reason why the Panchayats should not be empowered with appropriate judicial and police powers to settle petty cases of both civil and criminal nature and to defuse any potential conflict situation both among individuals and groups with their own Panchayat guards.

Devolution of powers and functions so far done in most of the States makes a mockery the concept of self-government. In fact the Panchayats cannot develop as genuine units of self-government without corresponding drastic reduction/restructuring of powers and the administrative set-up of the Central and the State Governments at least in respect of items included in the Eleventh Schedule. The stifling overhang of enormous Central and State administrative structures is a serious impendiment to the autonomous Panchayat administrative set-up. This point is not being addressed with the seriousness it deserves in any debate on the Panchayats. Any genuine attempt to do so would release adequate personnel for redeployment in the Panchayats. A national consensus has to be evolved for this massive task but no one seems to be interested.

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THE need for personnel arises due to four-fold reasons.

First, to be an autonomous institution of self-government every Panchayat at each tier requires a minimum skeletal core staff. Second, for the preparation of plans for economic development and social justice would require technical inputs for which personnel would be required. There could be a variety of options here. From the Volunteer Technical Corps concept of Kerala to hiring out technical consultants with a core planning unit at the ZP level—there could be various possibilities. Third, for the assigned task under the Eleventh Schedule personnel would be required to perform there. And fourth, at the ZP level they would require core personnel for financial and asset management and accounts and internal audit staff at all levels.

One should not be apprehensive looking at the list above. In fact the first thing the Panchayats should do is to have a lean but efficient bureaucracy. They have nothing to learn from the State and Central Governments on this count, which now exist only to pay higher and better emoluments and perquisites to their existing employees being largely oblivious of their commitment to their own people. This danger the Panchayats must avoid from the very beginning.

Secondly, the Panchayats should avoid having a third parallel line of bureaucracy alongwith the Centre and the States. In the last three and-half years I had the opportunity to go round the country for holding 45 sub-regional workshops on Panchayats on behalf of the Task Force on Panchayats of the RGF. Almost everywhere there was a demand for having agriculture and engineering staff exclusively with the Panchayats. In Kerala at least the Krishi Bhawans are adjunct to the Panchayat Bhawans. In West Bengal the Block Agriculture Officer's office is situated at a median distance of one-and-a half kilometre from the PS office. The World Bank introduced the Brahminical order of the one-line system in the seventies to avoid contamination from the BDO and VLW—that system persists with ever growing vigour after nearly two decades of Panchayats in the State. In Kerala there is a Sen Committee to go into the whole issue. I have gone through one of its interim reports. A conscious effort is being made to grapple with this seemingly intractable question. Elsewhere there is no thinking even on what to do. To illustrate the issue, in an area where there is a Krishi Vigyan Kendra, there would be its agri-extension officers. In the same block there would be the State agri-department's agri-extension officer Since in many Statea agri-extension officers are not attached to the Block Panchayat, Panchayats want a separate cadre of agri-extension officer Now ir this area we would have three sets of agri-extension officers doing or not doing the same job, thereby increasing the civil establishment cost by three times This is a thoroughly irrational, expensive and inefficient system of personnel policy This has to be avoided at all costs

Thirdly, many jobs can be contracted out It is generally found that many low level engineering jobs get delayed due to apathy or non-cooperation of the government engineering staff On the top of this there is often the issue of illegal gratification In Orissa, UP and a couple of other States during the sub-regional workshops elected functionaries openly complained about the insistence of the engineering and other technical staff to increase scheme/project cost by 25 to 30 per cent so that they could have their cut, and without which they would not sanction projects or schemes This avoidable irritant can be overcome by using the professional services of consulting engineers, designers and architects Government orders have to be changed Once that is done the Panchayats would be free from the fetters put on them by the need for vetting by government technical staff It will also open up opportunities for self-employment by various technical personnel of different disciplines The Panchayats would have choice of going to private consulting firms or the government agencies that would bring about a degree of competition which in its turn would drastically reduce if not totally eliminate the monopoly rent demanded by the government agencies This is nothing revolutionary It is only the extension of the principle already accepted by all governments regarding the audit reports prepared by charactered accountants' firms The same principles would apply *mutatus mutandis*, to all other technical fields

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OVER the years, in the name of development, government departments have proliferated like the mutation of uni cells in the earliest stage of evolution in life in the universe And created in the name of functional efficiency the strongly positioned vertical line departments have become dysfunctional and developmentally counterproductive All attempts to bring about horizontal coordination at the field level had been ad hoc in nature and have failed so far In a very pessimistic mood the Mukarji-Bandyopadhyay report on Panchayats in West Bengal noted in 1993

> The Panchayats are horizontal interventions in this vertical jungle Any hope that they would be able to secure horizontal coordination was doomed, because the vertical hierarchies were too well enterenched and the Panchayats did not have even minimal weaponry to bring them within their coordinating principles

It is here that the attack has to be mounted Many State Finance Commissions have submitted their reports In various ways they have suggested giving untied funds to Panchayats according to their "entitlement"

What resources the Panchayats would get would no longer be a matter of discretion It is a question of entitlement Once the entitlement is fixed and untied, funds start flowing, the strong entrenchment of vertical line department would be breached Their resistance to the Panchayat might flare up but would soon subside I understand the Chairman of the Kerala Agriculture Commission openly expressed dissatisfaction about earmarking of 40 per cent of planned funds for the Panchayats as grant-in-aid, as he thought it would impair the efficiency and productivity of the Agriculture Department He obviously overlooked the fact that during the last eight Plans and periods of rolling annual plans the Department received 100 per cent of its planned funds but the cereal production in Kerala went down by 20 to 25 per cent As against this we have the successful example of Kanji Kuzhy GP in Alleppy enhancing production through community effort which is worth imitation by all

With the funds and allocation of functions, the staff attached to such activities should be placed with the Panchayats at appropriate levels These personnel will be under the administrative control of the Panchayats The State Government should continue to bear the establishment cost of the personnel so transferred, as in any case they were doing so when these people were under their direct control The position will be analogous to the one existing between the Central and State Governments in respect of All India Services Officers serving under the State Government The Panchayats would supervise the day-to-day work of the staff, coordinate the work of the staff of different departments located in the district to get maximum utilisation, keep service records of performance, grant leave and pay salaries to them A State Department, on the other hand, will lay down its general policy, pass on know-how, give training to its staff to keep them upto date with the latest knowledge and skill

While placement of the staff to the Panchayat would depend upon the nature and quantum of functions transferred to them, the general principle should be that the Panchayats at different levels should have access to services of such official with control over them as are engaged in the activities relatable to the transferred items

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It is time to seriously scrutinise various States and Central laws, regulations manuals, government orders which go against proper devolution of powers and functions to the Panchayats For example, item No 17 in the Eleventh Schedule lists "education, including primary and secondary schools" But in some States there are District Primary Education Boards/Councils set up under the State law which function totally autonomously without any reference to the Panchayats. But in the States where primary education has been placed under the Panchayats there has been remarkable improvement of attendance of teachers, enrolment of students including girls, and lessening of drop-outs. Item No 7 mentions "minor forest produce" But the Indian Forest Act does not recognise the Panchayats To be effective that Act has to be amended and the Forest Staff at least upto the Assistant Conservator of Forests have to be placed under the Panchayats at the appropriate level.

The personnel policy of the Panchayats has to have two phases The first phase is the current transitional phase. It will take perhaps another two general elections of the Panchayats to settle down with substutive powers, functions and resources During this period, obviously, there should not be any attempt to build up a separate cadre for the Panchayats excepting at the junior levels which should include the GP Secretary. The rest of the technical and general posts should be filled up depending upon transfer of power and functions from the State cadres on deputation With the transfer of function, the State would not require the services of many of its existing personnel These posts should not be filled up to allow some downsizing of the State bureaucracy. With attrition the deputationists would also gradually fade out in 10-15 years time .That will be the time to think seriously about developing the Panchayats' own cadre of technical and non-technical personnel. Either a separate Public Service Commission for the Panchayats or a wing of the State Public Service Commission may be dedicated for recruitment of the Panchayat personnel Since Panchayat service may not afford good career prospects for bright boys and girls, the Panchayat may not afford good career prospects for bright boys and girls, panchayat may not attract such persons of quality Hence the Panchayat would have to seriously think of keeping 40 to 50 per cent of its senior positions for deputation from the State civil and technical services and All India Services The All India Services were meant to fill up senior district positions before the Panchayats There is no reason why members of these services should not have the chance of enriching their experience, knowledge and skill by working under the Panchayats Moreover, the Panchayats being an integral part of the system of governance of the country they should insist on their quota of All India Service Officers in their set-up That should ensure perhaps better quality of officers serving the Panchayats The same relationship which exists between the Centre and the States regarding the All India Services should be extended to the Panchayats vis-a-vis the State

In the system of diarchy that has been introduced there would remain a whole universe of relationship of proper functioning between the bureaucrats administering the "reserved" subjects and the Panchayats dealing with the "transferred" subjects One way of nominally tackling the issue is to make the District Magistrate, the Chief Executive Officers of the Zilla Parishad as in West Bengal At least this system makes it clear who is the political boss in the district The Hegde model of the Chief Secretary to the ZP being higher in rank to the DM does not always operate correctly Even if the CEO is senior in service "real" power in the popular position would still belong the Collector Frictions are bound to arise and manipulating politicians would try to play one off the other Since it is the third layer of governance, the Panchayats should not remain forever in the *cul-de-sac* of development only

So long as this diarchy continues, which is itself a threat to the autonomy of the Panchayats, the bureaucracy requires definite reorientation from the earlier role of a plenipotentiary acting as the guardians of emperor's subjects. The role changed even during the latter period of colonial administration to that of a "ruler" administering a territory or discharging a function as prescribed by law, rules or government orders. Of course, a lot of discretion was left to the "rulers" which they were supposed to exercise not capriciously but rationally and judiciously

This role model of a "ruler" did not at all change after independence On the contrary it got strengthened due to increase in the tasks that the welfare state assigned the Centre itself One of the major tasks

(Continued on page 80)

RURAL EMPLOYMENT

Policy and Practice in Rajasthan

SANJOY GHOSE

The following paper was written by the author, a noted social worker (who was abducted sometime back by the ULFA militants in Assam and is now alleged to have been killed), a few years ago It was sent to Mainstream *for publication by L C Jain, the distinguished Gandhian and a former Member of the Planning Commission (who has now been appointed the Indian High Commissioner to South Africa) with a note which read "This paper came to my notice when I was asked to chair a 'India Country Seminar Facilities and Access to Basic Needs NGO Government National Organisations Collaborations' (February 16-19, 1992) What was unique about Sanjoy's paper was that it revealed a very sensitive mind which was able to capture every nuance and feel the pain of the victims of our process of development It was only the next morning that I was to make his personal acquaintance and found utter correspondence between his personality and the paper" This is being published as a tribute to Sanjoy* —Editor

This paper is an attempt to critique the deficiency between policy and practice on the issue of employment in rural Rajasthan

At the outset, a disclaimer issues of practice are related to personal grassroots experience in some desert districts of Western Rajasthan, and as such may not be directly generalisable to the wider context of the State, but since many of the administrative and political processes are the same, there is not likely to be any major variance

The issue of employment is important not in itself but because it is so critically linked to poverty Poverty is highly prevalent in labour-dependent households For the country as a whole, 61 per cent of those in such units were below the poverty line in 1983 as compared to 39 per cent for self-employed households [1] In Rajasthan, the comparative figures were 54 per cent and 39 per cent respectively What is more disturbing is a trend towards the increasing casualisation of the workforce

Consider the table below

Percentage Distribution of Workers by Activity Status Categories in Rajasthan[2]

Rural

	Male	*Female*	*Total*
	Self-Employment		
1977-78	83 5	91 1	87 0
1983	80.7	89.3	84 5
1987-88	67.8	82 2	74 3
	Casual Wage Employment		
1977-78	10 8	8 3	9 7
1983	12 8	9 8	11 5
1987-88	25 0	16 0	20 9

While some of the increase can be attributed to 1986-87 being a drought year (and consequently higher employment on public employment programmes and relief works), there is no escaping the fact that the numbers searching for wage employment is rising The implication, especially in the context of cutbacks in social services (in the name of rationalisation of subsidies) and increases in the prices of basic commodities, including foodgrains on the Public Distribution System, is that those who depend wholly on wages for sustenance will be worst hit

The most vulnerable will be those families in rural areas in which there is no working member, or those with a single working female *Together, these two categories account for 10 per cent of total households*

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RAJASTHAN conjures up the picture of deserts, and the association of "desert" is one of a barren wasteland Policy documents by the State Government bemoan the fact of the State's "geo-physical limitations", making the plea that uncertain rainfall in about 60 per cent of the area of the State, and frequent visitations of drought and famine are responsible for the State's underdevelopment

At one level, this is not contested certainly, in terms of the constructs that Western macroeconomic theory has equipped us with, there has been a slow growth rate, a widening in the gap between State and national per capita income, and low productivity in many sectors

But the desert is a fragile eco-system, and has existed for centuries before "development" took place It supports a very rich culture, and man had worked out a system for survival, based largely on community relationships—with grazing lands, drinking water, and migration Many of these systems would be inappropriate today, in the context of the highly individualised way that we have come to understand development, but there is a question here are we doing the right thing in considering employment in Rajasthan as a value-neutral concept? All our irrigation, and heavy industry and exploitation of minerals usher in a kind of development, an increase in employment, but what will the long-term consequences be?

Let me illustrate this quandary with two concrete examples

About fifty kilometres south of Bikaner is the town of Kolayat, venerated as the meditation place of Kapil muni Situated in a vast desert expanse, the small town is built around a water catchment, said to date back to the time of Kapil muni, almost two thousand years ago The catchment (*talab*) is mentioned in old State gazetteers, which claim that the water drains from an area of over 350 square kilometres into the *talab* Till 1987, even the severest droughts did not affect it, it always supported water for drinking and bathing for Kolayat and the villages nearby Every year on *Kartik Purnima,* thousands descend for a ceremonial bath in the pond The day marks the unofficial onset of winter

In 1987, the *talab* ran dry Many associated it with the effect of the *mahakaal,* the drought that was so severe because it was the sixth consecutive year That year the district administration brought in water in tankers for drinking

In 1992, it is dry again This year is no *mahakaal,* just a usual drought, the kind that the Kolayat *talab* had withstood for centuries But this year the cause is transparent For twenty kilometres on all sides, the government has leased out land to brick kilns, and for mining the mineral-rich gypsum, and fullers earth, raw material for the ceramics industry that has recently developed in Bikaner

Undoubtedly some people are employed in the ceramics business, and several more in digging the bowels of the earth to extract everything of commercial value, but how does one assess the cost in terms of the damage to the environment? It is likely that Kolayat will now get its drinking water from a "lift canal" off the Indira Gandhi Main Canal, bringing sweet water from the Ravi and the Beas in Himachal, and in the process will generate thousands of mandays in construction, and irrigation on the way, but something doesn't seem right in this engineered solution

The contrast in the pattern of development is again best illustrated with an example from the drinking water context About fifty years ago, a person died of thirst on the main road of Lunkaransar village That was a time, which many people still remember, of queuing up at the railway station for the supply of one *ghada* (small earthen container) of water High-caste people used the stratagem of placing animal carcasses outside their doors so that weary travellers would not ask for water (logic a person would rather die of thirst than lose his caste), and visitors were provided milk, but no water Today the same villages are supplied water by the Public Health Engineering Department, and stagnant pools of fetid water greet you at the entrance of the village, in some water buffaloes wallowing Nobody stops the water, all the taps are broken If you ask about this wanton waste, there's always an excuse but the main fact is that there is no community control any more Government proposes, provides, and so can dispose

There is a valuable lesson here for employment policy and practice All the major "employment promotion schemes" of the government are designed to build infrastructure, but who will maintain them?

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LET us now take a look at the major "employment generation" schemes operational in western Rajasthan. Perhaps the best to begin with would be the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, the new *avataar* of the earlier National Rural Employment Programme, and the Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme

On paper, this is a decentralised, people-controlled scheme, with the option of taking up any kind of work In practice, it remains strictly controlled by the district administration, there is a lack of information and accountability, and the kind of works permitted are only construction of school buildings or community centres—which is only one of the eleven options officially available Now construction of school buildings is not a bad thing in itself, but the objective of being an employment generation programme is then defeated

The way the system works in practice

Officially, only 50 per cent of the cost of the project can be spent on materials, since after all, the primary objective is to employ labour

While this kind of ratio is manageable on earthworks—such as digging ponds (unlined), or promoting soil conservation measures, anybody who has built a cement-mortar structure will tell you differently.

In an ordinary schoolroom type structure, the normal material labour ratio is 85 15, that is, for every ten thousand rupees spent, only fifteen hundred would go towards labour payments So how do the schoolrooms get built, on such an unrealistic ratio (50 50)?

What the Sarpanch—usually the person who has the responsibility for building the structure—does to manage, is to falsify muster-rolls

For instance, every muster-roll, with fifty names on both sides, represents a payment of Rs 16,500 (for fifteen days, at the minimum wage of twentytwo rupees a day) For work worth Rs 1 lakh, he would be issued six muster rolls Since the actual labour payment would be well within one muster roll, the others would be used to supplement the material shortfall, or in many cases, just represent a "leakage" in the system

For obvious reasons, all work in JRY is supposed to be implemented by the Gram Panchayat, or "departmentally", so that workers would be assured of their basic wages

In fact, almost the entire work is done through contractors

The reasons are primarily two , if the Panchayat was to do the work itself, (the assumption is that) productivity would be less, since workers know that they can insist on twentytwo rupees for a day's work—and the onus is basically on the supervisor, to see that the workman delivers

Secondly, keeping the agreement between the contractor and the Sarpanch means less public information, and less cause for trouble

Getting payment for the work means having the Junior Engineer from the Panchayat Samiti to "verify" that the structure is complete (or half complete, if you take the money in two instalments)

Work is supposed to be done according to rates and norms specified in a document called the "Basic Schedule of Rates (BSR)", which is revised every two years. The BSR for the Bikaner PWD division was revised in April 1991

The BSR is a reasonable document, but it suffers from the same rigidity

For instance, a mason cannot be paid more than sixty rupees a day according to the rules, but in practice when you're actually paying eighty rupees, how do you "adjust"?

The way it's done is to add another name on to the muster Now take the situation where you have three masons, each of whom is being paid eighty rupees a day An honest man would write four names, at sixty rupees a day, to make up the deficit—but many don't have such fine qualms A couple of extra names represents the commission, the non-taxable benefits that keep a whole section of engineers in clover

So in fact your aggregate figures for JRY and NREP need to be somewhat scaled down, to assess their real distributional employment impact

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WHILE we're on the subject of famine relief works, another caveat in most cases, workers get less than the minimum wage that they're entitled to While part of the reason is that workers have in fact worked less than the norm prescribed by the State Government (for instance, in Jodhpur sandy tracts, the rate for earthwork is twentytwo rupees for seventy cubic feet of mud), the reasons are much more complex

Since many false names would be on the muster-roll, and the payment is made on the basis of total work done, the amount payable to each real person is less than what she has worked So in fact in a case where ten of the fifty names on the muster are fictitious, the forty persons must dig 87 5 cubic metres every day to be paid the minimum wage When this equation becomes apparent (usually after the first payment) this acts as a further disincentive The common plaint by the administration, of course, is that the workers are lazy

At a philosophical level also this is an issue

The concept of a minimum wage means an agreed upon basic formula for a subsistence ration, clothes and shelter

Yet systematically the State Government has denied payment of minimum wages on relief works, on grounds that work had not been done according to norms

Many workers feel that this is an unfair onus entirely on the worker, and that the responsibility should be shared between the worker and the supervisor, who is responsible for seeing that the work is done according to the measurement norms

The way the law is interpreted now makes one believe that what the legislators had in mind was not a minimum wage, but rather a maximum wage, which cannot be increased

In all famine relief works, this basic contradiction still exists On the one hand, workers are bound to stay from nine in the morning till five in the evening, irrespective of whether they finish their work—which is in effect a time rate norm—but on the other hand, they aren't entitled to the minimum wage for staying the entire day, and have to fulfil a productivity norm as well.

The Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan in Bhim, Udaipur district, has been having a sustained agitation to insist on the right of workers to a minimum wage—this inspite of several policy pronouncements, and three separate High Court judgements—showing the extent to which policy has to be bridged to practice[3]

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In the remaining space, we will look briefly at three other policy and practice interfaces in the National Scheme of Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM), on the increase in irrigated area in the Indira Gandhi Canal Project, and the policy on dairy development.

The TRYSEM programme, designed in Shastri Bhavan (or Yojana Bhavan) is another example of an excellent idea with some basic implementation lacunae.

In the programme, young persons below the poverty line (belonging to "identified" families) are to be provided training in a vocation that they will subsequently take up, with the help of some small start-up finance (varies, but usually around four to six hundred rupees) towards a "tool kit", and a bank loan to buy the asset (loom, charkha, etc)

The difficulty starts right at the stage of identification Beneficiaries are ostensibly chosen at a public meeting, so that the poorest off are selected, but in effect while a number of the poor do get selected through this process, some of the more affluent find their way in—as a route to subsidised assets, camel carts, cows, etc —and some of the really poor get left out

They may not be there, for instance Recently (November 1991) the selection process was carried out when a large number of the poor had already migrated. Since there was nobody there to propose and second them, they just got left out—till the next time that the selection takes place, perhaps in a few years

IRDP selection also represents a great opportunity to settle scores with borrowers, in an uncertain environment

Take the case of Kisnaram, former Sarpanch of Nakodesar village, in Lunkaransar tehsil of Bikaner district. He'd lent ten thousand rupees to Prabhu Ram, to pay for his daughter's wedding, which had now accumulated to almost thirtyfour thousand rupees, in just under five years

He charges a vicious interest, and has also taken possession of Prabhu Ram's land, which he deigns to "lend" back to him each year, for a consideration

Everyone knows that Prabhu Ram is desperately poor, but his strongest supporter for "selection" for benefit under IRDP is Kisnaram himself The reason the loan that Prabhu Ram gets will be used as part payment, to settle the old debt

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This leads to another practical problem You can't select anyone for benefit under IRDP who's already been "benefited" in the past, even if the benefit is as fleeting as in the case of Prabhu Ram And if by chance his wife was to register for a TRYSEM training, she wouldn't be entitled to a loan from the bank, because of Prabhu Ram's default We've tried to argue this case with the local bank staff—who aren't interested anyway, because all IRDP loans are losses—saying that in case an industrialist defaults, it wouldn't automatically debar his wife from taking a loan on that ground, but that's just the way that the law is interpreted on the ground

Now even assuming that by some coincidence, all the beneficiaries identified for the training under TRYSEM are selected IRDP beneficiaries Even then, they're entitled to a monthly stipend of one hundred and fifty rupees a month, for which they have to attend class for at least four hours during the day (no concept of flexi-time permissible here), which effectively means that they lose that day's wage

This simple fact means that the poorest wage earners—those female-headed households totally dependent on wage labour, for instance—would almost by definition be excluded

Now even assuming that we've finished the training, and managed to get a bank loan, inspite of all the problems, the basic problems of raw materials and marketing still have to be faced Although this is supposed to include some training on entrepreneurship and management as well, the reality is that it remains confined to simple, technical details A favourite for training is stitching, because you don't need the bank loan after the training—the tool kit amount will cover the costs of a simple machine, which if nothing else, is a useful wedding gift for the daughter of the house

Investment in the Indira Gandhi Nahar Pariyojna has been the single largest public expenditure aimed to generate employment, both directly and indirectly

Although a substantial portion of the Canal and sub systems in Stage II (Bikaner-Jaisalmer-Barmer) have already been built, there are scarcely any settlers

This is a complex problem, but the main reason is that a technical approach has been taken, not considering the human aspects Practical examples when new settlers arrive for the first time, especially landless persons without any experience of settled, leave alone irrigated, agriculture, they are faced with an intensely hostile environment. For the first two years, it would be full time work just to clear the field channels to get the water to the field, provided that all the paperwork for land allotment is done Yet the government in its munificent wisdom, entitles the farmer to two years of free rations after he's irrigated his field for the first time. Proof that you've irrigated your field a certificate from the ubiquitous Patwari, ostensibly the lowest rung in the development administration system, but in fact more powerful than the commissioner, for the man on the ground—who needs his every more certified by the Patwari, or else his land gets cancelled

Getting the Patwari to certify that you've irrigated your field isn't difficult, for a fee, but the remedy is likely to be more painful than the illness in this case

From the date that he claims to be irrigating his land, his instalments on the "notional" price of the land also start. And in the Indira Gandhi canal, the worst extortionist is the government, which charges at compound rates of interest on the almost inevitable defaults When the farmer defaults, because he's unable to take a crop, since water hasn't reached his field, a hefty penalty is slapped on him So it's not unusual to have farmers pay in excess of three times the cost of the land they were allotted on paper to get their *khatedari* (right to sell, or mortgage)

Yet when the government fails to deliver the water, or provide information on time, the financial impact is still picked up by the cultivator This is a prime disincentive for settlers

The way out by the government is to make land available for "auction" to outsiders The best land has been reserved for this kind of "special allotment", increasing the inequalities already existing The spillover benefits in employment terms are by no means certain either—there has been a tendency towards a widespread use of labour-displacing machinery (combine harvesters) in the early reaches of the Canal, which not only displace labour, but also destroy crop residues, that form the basic dry fodder for the landless, cattle owning poor

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A final word on the policy on milch animal husbandry in the State.

Rajasthan, with seven per cent of the cattle wealth in the country, contributes more than its share of milk to the national milk grid. Cattle numbers are projected to increase from a level of 109 lakhs in 1988 to 120 lakhs by the turn of the century

The Advisory Committee on Employment, Government of Rajasthan,[4] visualised an employment potential of between 1 5-2 0 lakh man years to be created in the animal husbandry sector during the next decade in the State This seems to be a realistic estimate, considering that the State has a tradition of animal husbandry, supporting the most productive and hardy breeds of cattle (Rathi, Tharparkar) and grasses (*sewan-lasirus sindicus,* and *dhaman,* among others).

Although the Committee's estimates mainly reflect employment to be provided in ancillary processing industries, there is a significant opportunity to convert the "casual" labour force into self-employed persons, provided that the right conditions prevailed

At the present time, even with the imputed cost of labour at zero, cattle rearing is unremunerative, because of the tremendously high costs of cattle feed concentrate, and the scarcity of dry fodder The price of milk offered by the organised cooperative sector is kept artificially low because the major buyer of liquid milk—which represents the maximum contribution to profitability—is the Delhi metropolis, where food price increases would be politically sensitive

The difficulty is that the cooperative apparatus in Rajasthan is not freed from state control—aside of the most inane bye-laws, which provide sweeping powers to the Registrar of Cooperative Societies and petty officials in that department, it is administered as a kind of para-statal institution, with the imperatives of both the government as well as the farmers to deal with

This is clearly an untenable situation

Two scenarios are possible

With delicensing of the dairy industry, milk prices will come closer to their "real" prices, and farmers would continue to keep cattle, and sell milk to the private trade

The other scenario, which is more likely, considering that few in the private sector have the

(Continued on page 80)

Gujarat Well Poised for First Position in Industrial Development

Gujarat has made rapid strides in the industrial development since it came into being on May 1, 1960

Gujarat ranked first in terms of new investments in 1994 A large number of new industrial enterprises are going to be set up in the State involving a very huge total investment of Rs 50,000 crores by 2000 AD and beyond

The Government led special emphasis on industrialisation in a manner which is conducive to balanced regional growth and healthy environment as well as opportunities for employment During the current financial year, ten large projects involving a total investment of Rs 3000 crores have gone into commercial production As many as 2435 new projects involving an aggregate investment of Rs 1,25,000 crores are under various stages of implementation.

Small and medium enterprises are the backbone in the State The number of small scale units in the State has increased to 1,94,000 including 7132 new units registered during the current year upto November 1996. The number of employment generated by SSIs, registered during the current financial year, is estimated to be nearly 28,000

To meet the increasing demand of power in the 21st Century, the State Government has also welcomed the participation of private sector for augumentation of power generaiton in the State for setting up several power projects with a total capacity of 3500 MW The present installed capacity in the State is 6000 MW An additional 6000 MW is planned in the private sector under the new policy for which bids have already been invited At the end of the Ninth Five Year Plan, Gujarat will have 15,000 MW of installed capacity and would become surplus in power generation

Gujarat is the first State in the country to have ever received a loan of US $ 250 million from the Asian Development Bank

Since August 1991 Industrial Enterpreneurs Memorandums (IEMs) for 4207 units with an investment of Rs 1,09,077 crores and with an employment potential of 7 23 lakh persons have been filed in the Gujarat State Out of 28,043 IEMs filed with total investment to Rs 5,40,987 crores and providing employment to nearly 50 lakh persons in the country by the end of November 1996 the share of Gujarat in all India in respect of the IEMs filed, investment and employment works out to be 15 per cent, 20 16 per cent and 14 46 per cent respectively

During the last 37 years Gujarat has made tremendous strides in industrial development and if this trend of industrial progress continues vigorously it may secure a leading position among the Asian countries in the 21st century

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Buddha, Vivekananda, Ambedkar

PROGRESSION IN INDIAN THOUGHT

KUNAL GHOSH

It is almost customary for Indian thinkers of former times to trace their chosen theme back to some Vedic root, often by a tenuous linkage Gautama Buddha and Bhim Rao Ambedkar are exceptions and Swami Vivekananda is not Nevertheless, Vivekananda had some original things to say The aim of this article is to contextualise Buddha, Vivekananda and Ambedkar in the development of Indian thought This article has a narrow focus and that is caste It is not concerned with, for instance, *Maya* (illusion), *Advaita* (Monism), etc. Ambedkar made a thorough survey of Indian scriptures before adopting Buddhism To understand his thought we need this focus on caste.

Vedas and Reincarnation

INITIALLY the *Vedas* were not written down but preserved in memory, since about 1500 BC The Vedas, the epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata,* the *Manu Smriti,* etc were all written down and documented precisely in that millennium from 500 BC to 500 AD (exact dates unknown) when the earlier script *Bhrami* appeared and Buddhism and Jainism were flourishing This points to a society tolerant of multiple thought currents and is attributed to an outlook developed very early, typified in such quotes from the *Upanishads* and *Mahabharata* as *Ekam sat vipra bahudha vadanti* (He is one, wise men call him by different names) and *Sarva dharma sama bhava* (All dharmas are equally valid) The caste division makes its appearance very early too in the *Purusha Sukta* of the *Rigveda,* the most ancient of the four Vedas It sanctifies the four-fold caste system (*Chaturvarnya*) and calls it a creation by God Colebrook and Max Mueller judge this hymn to be comparatively modern. There is ground for suspicion that this is a later interpolation Elsewhere the same Rigveda refers to three *varnas* or castes, namely, *Brahmana, Kshatriya* and *Vaishya* The Purusha Sukta is quoted as an authority in the later texts

The two upper castes were involved in composing the Vedas, with the rituals part (*Karma Kanda*) being contributed to mainly by the Brahmanas and the philosophical part (*Gyana Kanda*) by both A good many of the ascetics (*Rishis*) who authored the Upanishads, which are portions of Gyana Kanda, were drawn from the warrior caste, mostly ex-kings or ex-princes Vishwamitra, Mahavira (the first *Tirthankara* of the Jains) and Buddha were the continuance of this tradition

The Vedas and Upanishads dwell on mystical union of the self with the Supreme Being called *Brahman* We find there an ethic which is concerned mainly with virtues such as truthfulness and objective caste duties enforced by the authority of tradition There are instances of only members of the upper two castes attaining mystical union with the Brahman It suffices for the lower castes to stick to their caste duties The larger ethic of subjective action where an individual chooses to go forth for the benefit of others, irrespective of caste, is either missing or existing on the periphery I have named such an ethic as the "ethic of subjective beneficient action" In fact for the Brahmana (synonymous in this article with Brahmin) and Kshatriya worldly action is limited to the first two phases of life, namely, *Brahmacharya* (student life) and *Garhasthya* (householder life) The later two phases, *Vanaprastha* (hermit life in the forest) and *Sanyasa* (life of complete renunciation) are characterised by withdrawal from activity Renunciation and mystical union with the Brahman are the dominant themes of the Upanishads It is concerned with the perfection to be attained by the seeker for his own self.

The Vedas harbour a curious contradiction, the rituals part of the text mentions numerous deities and a polytheistic mythology, whereas the philosophical part (Upanishads) is uncompromisingly monotheistic (*Advaita*) The contradiction is said to be apparent and not real since all deities proceed from the one and same Brahman So do all plant and animal life and man Western scholars have called it the doctrine of soul-in-all-things With this is related the doctrine of reincarnation or *Punarjanmavad.* It is not to be found in the Rig Veda and appears in later Vedas Through a succession of births the soul proceeds from a lower form to a higher form of life to arrive finally to a human form which is

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considered the highest The similarity with Darwin's theory of evolution has been noticed (Sri Aurobindo 1994), except with the proviso that rebirth may also be in a lower form. This depends on one's *karma* or the sum total of one's deeds Evil deeds committed by a man may result in a rebirth as a beast

Mahabharata

THE ethic of action without attachment to the fruit thereof first appears in the *Geeta* of *Mahabharata* Action here is still within the bounds of caste duty for the sake of upholding *dharma*. The Geeta categorically defines duty as the totality of the obligations which naturally belong to a man's station (caste) in life. The Geeta represents a definitive development in Indian thought inasmuch as it states that worldly action with inward detachment is a means of union with the Absolute This doctrine is called Karma Yoga and hereby Indian thought, for the first time, accords a high value to worldly activities.

Buddha

THE ethic of subjective beneficient action appears first in the teachings of Buddha who hails from the warrior caste. It becomes fully developed in Mahayana Buddhism. Buddha emphasises *karuna* or compassion alongside *ahimsa* The *ahimsa* doctrine first appeared in Jainism and meant non-killing and non-harming. It had nothing to do with compassion and active love and only to do with remaining untouched and unsullied by certain acts[1] In Buddhism *karuna* (compassion) takes precedence over *ahimsa*[2] and the latter is qualified For instance, animal slaughter and eating of meat is not completely prohibited

Buddha's compassion flows out to man and animal alike and springs from the realisation that all life is constantly subject to suffering In a discourse Buddha describes in moving words the fear and agony of the servants of a pitiless king who orders them to fetch animals for sacrifice In one of the Jataka stories of his earlier births, he gave himself to a hungry tigress to keep it from devouring its own cubs.

Buddha opened the door of his monastic order even to the despised Shudras. He says, to whatever caste a man belongs, if he lives the life of a true monk he can nevertheless reach perfection or *Nirvana* Such a monk, even if he hails from the Shudra caste, has the right to be a priest just as much as a monk from the upper castes. So the Buddha breaches the exclusive privilege of a Brahmin to be a priest. He confers a measure of equality on a Shudra by permitting him to lead a life of spirituality and priesthood (See Ghosh 1995) In my opinion he does it for his compassion for the suffering humanity of the Shudra caste And in doing so he negates caste boundaries and gives India the ethic of compassionate love

Buddha sets up two fundamental principles for any enquiry· (i) One should be concerned with only what has direct practical significance for Nirvana or redemption, and (ii) only what results from direct evidence may be regarded as fact Buddha repudiates the Vedas as authoritative To uphold these two principles he chooses to remain silent on the question whether there is a Supreme Being or universal soul (Brahman) On the other hand, he upholds the doctrine of transmigration of souls, which perforce admits a non-material soul surviving the death of the material body. The only explanation that reconciles these two positions is that he wanted to avoid useless debates, so common in his time, and idle speculation But his silence gave rise to debates even during his lifetime His position is not that of an atheist materialist, as it is often made out to be

In his first sermon at Benaras, Buddha says

> Birth is suffering, old age is suffering, to be united with what one loves not is suffering, to be separated from what one loves is suffering, not to attain what one desires is suffering (Schweitzer 1936, Ch iv, pp 96)

His world view seems pessimistic, incomplete and less satisfactory to a mind given to abstraction In comparison, the world view of the Vedic religion is more positive, complete and satisfying

Buddha's significance does not lie in the realm of theoretical thought but in his compassion and ethics Mahayana Buddhism went beyond the teaching of Buddha in that it no longer regarded cessation of incarnation as the highest goal It asks how can a compassionate man be preoccupied with the selfish goal of attaining Nirvana only for himself Then appear the Bodhisattvas, a class of saints who in spite of reaching perfection give up Nirvana and voluntarily accepts rebirth again and again to help other living creatures This is the ethic of subjective beneficient action in its noblest form

Decline of Buddhism

AN incomplete and pessimistic world view along with a few other factors such as excessive stress on monastic life and contempt for married life, foreign invasions, etc. led Buddhism into a decline in India The man who is most responsible for the revival of the Vedic religion is Shankara (ninth century AD), a Brahmin from the South He is known also as Aadi

Shankara or Shankaracharya He vigrously opposed the opinion that release from the cycle of birth and death, so cherished by both Vedas and Buddha, is dependent not only on mystical realisations (Gyaana) but also on ethical conduct (Schweitzer 1936, pp 165) So with the decline of Buddhism the ethic of subjective beneficient action vanished from the Indian soul Ethical conduct was confined again within the objective caste duties and monks stopped giving priestly service to the lay society Exclusive right of the Brahmin caste to priesthood returned and the Shudra was barred from entering the monastic order of Shankara

Manu Smriti

WHILE Buddhism was flourishing, there was an ominous parallel development The caste ideology was being sharpened by a section of Brahmins and the result was *Manu Smriti*. A few words on the Manu Smriti is needed here with which Shankara's world view is quite consistent and Ambedkar is at loggerheads

Manu Smriti or Manu's law book originated somewhere between 200 BC and 200 AD, but it contains matter which is much older. According to Manu, the Brahmins are appointed by the Supreme Being and they should be venerated as god-like creatures A ten-year old Brahmin must be respected as if he were the father of a hundred year old Kshtriya. Anyone who seizes a Brahmin by hair will have his hand cut off At the same time the laws spell out the strict standard of morality for a Brahmin The Brahmin must be hospitable and kind and without arrogance and guile He must be kind and friendly even to the members of the lowest caste Above all, he is forbidden to tell fortunes, to practise magic and to study astrology In other words, the parent is forbidden to practise the usual priestcraft, a law often observed in its breach

If a Brahmin finds buried treasure, it belongs to him, if the king finds such, he must share it with the Brahmins By his deferential behaviour to a Brahmin, a man of a lower caste can attain rebirth in a higher

The king is also to be respected like a deity in human form. Again, his duties are prescribed in the loftiest form For example, only if he controls his own desires he would be able to command obedience from his subjects He must protect the weak, the widows and all in distress. He must be mild in manner to the low and tolerate insult from those suffering from misfortune In battle he must observe a strict code of not to attack an enemy from the rear, not to strike a fallen man, etc.

All marriages must be consigned within the caste, that is to say, the bride and the bridegroom must be from the same caste

Theft is severely punished but the lower castes receive lighter punishment for this offence

The Chandalas must dwell outside the village So virtually a fifth caste, as a group of outcastes, is added now to the four-fold caste system (The present Hindu society everywhere shows a five-fold division and the outcastes are called "Panchamas" or the Fifth These are the untouchables to which Ambedkar belonged) The most unkind regulation is that for the killing of a thousand vertebrates a Brahmin has to make the same atonement (*prayashchitta*) as for the murder of a Shudra, whereas the murder of a Brahmin must be punished by death and rebirth as a beast

Shudras are forbidden to acquire learning in general and knowledge of the Vedas in particular

Manu applies the doctrine of *karma* not only to transmigration of the soul between man and animal but also between one caste and another A man's birth in a low caste is pre-ordained by his *karma* Therefore, he should accept it with complete submission, continue to do his caste duties, worship the Brahmin and king and he is sure to get a better caste in the next birth This doctrine coupled with the strict prohibition of inter-caste marriage and complete bar to a Shudra acquiring knowledge has an enormous sociological implication No one has ever produced a better doctrine to keep subjugated the working class and rob them of all initiative to better their lot. Biswas (1986) says

> The terrible Manu Smriti gave the injunction that the lowest caste of Shudras are created for providing service to others (Mandala 8, Sukta 413-14) Brahmins should not recite the sacred texts in presence of Shudras (Mandala 4, Sukta 99) The ears of him (a Shudra) who hears the Veda are to be filled with molten lead and lac, a Shudra is like a moving crematorium (*chalamana shmashana*), therefore the Veda is not to be read in the vicinity of a Shudra It is astounding that Shankara endorsed the terrible injunctions of Manu and even quoted an old saying Whatever Manu said is medicine

Friedrich Nietzsche in his "Antichrist" calls Manu Smriti

> a work which is spiritual and superior beyond comparison, which even only to name in one breath with the Bible would be a sin against the Holy Spirit (Schweitzer 1936)

because with this book the upper classes, the philosophers and warriors, hold the masses in an inescapable stranglehold. It should be recalled that Neitzsche is the Nazi ideologue whose *Thus spake Zarathustra* was compulsory reading for the Nazis (Of course, this book has nothing in common with what the real Zarathustra, the prophet of the Parsis, preached) Neitzsche was consumed by the thought of subjugation of mankind by a super race and found an ally in Manu

There is a contradiction between the Upanishadic philosophy of all-permeating Brahman or divinity-on-all-beings and the five-fold caste system, which categorises men into the divine, the non-divine touchable and the despicable untouchable Yet Shankara is a champion of both and Manu is the codifier of the ideology that conjoins the two He makes virtues out of condescending benevolence of the upper castes and grovelling submission of the lower castes and gives them religious sancitity Thus he produces a nearly perfect blend of caste virtues which succeeds in creating a society which is highly stratified and at the same time extremely stable The lower castes accept their inferior station in society with deep piety and in course of time become convinced of their inherent inferiority *This is the greatest tragedy of the Indian civilisation, and Nietzsche's certificate to Manu's ideas is an apt one* I am of the opinion that ideas rule mankind just as much as the so called objective conditions of economics and production relations, or perhaps even that ideas have an edge

Vivekananda and Buddha

MANU's aforementioned reference to the Shudras as *chalmana shmashana* (moving crematorium) and its endorsement by Shankara aroused indignation in Vivekananda There is ample proof of this in his writings But he scarcely used condemnatory words in describing India's past. He knew that a people enslaved and demoralised for centuries cannot be roused by condemnation He seemed to be saying—my fellow countrymen, you have done great things in the past but there are blemishes, you have done well but you must do better He was a patriot and India was then yoked to foreign rule, and that is the context he must be judged in All that Vivekananda permits himself to say about Shankara is that he was a man of great intellect but quite heartless

Vivekananda admired Buddha for his compassion and following in his footsteps opened the door of the monastic order he (Vivekananda) established to all castes He gave the right of priesthood to the Shudra (see Ghosh 1995 for details)

Vivekananda's greatest contribution to Indian thought is that he combines the religion of Vedic mysticism with the ethic of subjective beneficient action He quotes from a Upanishad "Hear me O children of the Supreme Immortal" (*Shrinwantu Vishwe Amritasya Putraah*) and says all men have the same divinity at the core and therefore by implication the caste distinction is man-made. This seems a logical extension of the Upanishads, although Manu and Shankara attribute divinity only to the Brahmin and the king Vivekananda asks

> Who reduced the Bhangis and the Pariahs to their present degraded conditions? Heartlessness in our behaviour and at the same time preaching wonderful Advaitism (oneness of all)—is it not adding insult to injury? (*Complete Works*, Vol 6, pp 115)

The mission Vivekananda sets before his followers, monks and householders alike, is service to the living in the spirit of love to God (*Shiva gyan-e jeeva seva*) This is the ethic of subjective beneficient action, outside the limits of caste duties, discussed earlier in the context of the universal compassion of Buddha, with the only difference that Vivekananda replaces compassion (*karuna*) by service (*seva*) So the keyword in Vivekananda is "service"

Vivekananda's guru, Ramakrishna, instructed that the highest goal is to attain perfection (*Samyak samadhi* of Buddhism) and yet to continue to live an ordinary life on this earth for the sake of service to others, to be concerned only with one's own salvation is too selfish This is identical with the ideal of Bodhisattvas of Mahayana Buddhism, discussed earlier Vivekananda claimed that in his meditations he often had visions of Buddha. He considered himself inspired by Buddha and was fond of reading texts on Buddha and Buddhism, such as Edwin Arnold's *Light of Asia, Prajna Paramita, Lalita Vistara,* etc He wrote

> The Lord once more came to you as the Buddha and taught you how to feel, how to sympathise with the poor, the miserable, the sinner, but you heard him not (*Letters of Swami Vivekananda,* to Alasinga)
>
> They (the poor and the low caste) have no chance, no escape, no way to climb up This state of things must be removed, not by destroying religion, but following the great teachings of the Hindu faith and joining with it the wonderful sympathy of the logical development of Hinduism—Buddhism (*Complete Works*, Vol 5, pp 14-15)

The purpose of narrating all this is to show that emancipation of the lowest castes and admiration of Buddha are common between Vivekananda and Ambedkar It is well known that the latter converted to Buddhism, but the former's spiritual and ethical affinity to Buddha is not well known

Socialism

ALTHOUGH Karl Marx (1818-1883) predates Vivekananda (1863-1902), the latter was not familiar with Marx's writings and ideas Marx was hardly known in India during his time However, he was familiar with the ideas of the Fabian socialists Some of his statements drawing parallel between European class division and Indian caste anticipate Marx and are full of insight

He gives the sequence of passage of political power from the Brahmin (church clergy) to the Kshatriya (feudal lord) to the Vaishya (capitalist businessman) and to the Shudra (working class) He finds both merits and demerits in the rule of each caste and in the caste system as a whole, here Ambedkar differs

In his *Vartaman Bharat* Vivekananda says that Brahmin rule combines excellence in learning with the evils of priestcraft and cotery monopoly of knowledge Kshatriya rule gives urban civilisation, removal of superstition and priestcraft and development of lofty philosophical ideas But it leads also to tyranny Vaishya rule results in greater distribution of knowledge and ideas, but also in intense and widespread exploitation Shudra rule will lead to greater prosperity for the common man but also to the paucity of extraordinary geniuses According to Subrata Gupta (1984), a Professor of Economics, Vivekananda is the first Indian to call himself a socialist Vivekananda declares

> I am a socialist not because I think it is a perfect system, but half a loaf is better than no bread (*Letters*, p 380)

About 20 years before the onset of the Russian Revolution, he predicted a socialist revolution to sweep Russia or China (Gupta 1984)

Ambedkar too realises that dependent on emancipation of the Dalits (untouchable caste) is the advent of socialism and vice versa In his *Annihilation of Caste* (1937) he sets the caste annihilatory democratic change as a precondition for the class annihilatory socialist change In spite of his extremely busy schedule he finds time to participate in the trade union movement His socialism and caste emancipation were to be carried forth by the institutions of the parliamentary form of democracy, in which he had an abiding faith He gave little credence to the doctrines of revolution

Merits of the Caste System

VIVEKANANDA advances a most original argument about the merit of the caste system which has not attracted the attention it deserves This is in addition to the usual arguments that division of labour is needed in society and that caste keeps competition within desirable limits He refers to the post-Vedic epic age of Indian civilisation when the caste system with its endogamous marriage had come into existence but not yet become rigidly hereditary, and transfer across the caste line was still possible He says (*Complete Works*, Vol 4, p 464-70)

> In the first place scarcely any opportunity was given to the Shudra for accumulation of wealth or the earning of proper knowledge and education, to add to this disadvantage if ever a man of extraordinary parts and genius were born in the Shudra class, the influential higher sections lifted him up to their own circle his own caste people reaped no benefits of his attainment and not only so, the good for nothing people, the scum and refuse of the higher castes were cast off and thrown into the Shudra class to swell their numbers
>
> Vasistha, Narada, Satyakaam, Jabala, Vyasa, Kripa, Drona, Karna, and others of questionable parentage were raised to the position of a Brahmana or a Kshatriya, in virtue of their superior learning or valour, but it remains to be seen how, by these upliftings, the prostitute, maid-servant, fisherman or the charioteer class was benefited
>
> In modern India no one born of Shudra parents, be he a millionaire or a great pundit, has ever the right to leave his own society, with the result that the power of his wealth, intellect or wisdom, remaining confined within his own caste limits, is being employed for the betterment for his own community This hereditary caste system of India, being thus unable to overstep its own bounds, is slowly but surely conducing to the advancement of the people moving within the same circle

He comments that the present society in the West suffers from the same defect as ancient India Here he posits individualism against intra-caste socialism Western society has a great deal of individualism which renders an individual free to travel across class thresholds The Indian society, in contrast, is characterised by a cooperative spirit within the caste *beradari* or brotherhood The great merit of intra-caste socialism is that it makes extraordinary men like Phuley and Ambedkar work for the upliftment of their own caste Neither would they like to abandon their fellow castemen and co-sufferers nor can they be coopted into an upper caste Vivekananda is almost prescient in anticipating the arrival of an Ambedkar to emancipate his (Ambedkar's) people

Vivekananda's Contribution

FIRST of all, Vivekananda combines the Vedic mystical religion of divinity-in-all-beings with a caste-free ethic of subjective beneficient action This results in a worldview more complete and satisfactory than either the Vedic religion or Buddhism An ethical act is also a spiritual act since it must be performed in the spirit of service to the divinity present in man His ethics leads him to a macro-economic-sociological enquiry and he arrives at socialism in an intuitive way His contribution to Hindu thought, therefore, is spiritual ethical socialism It needs to be reiterated that his political ideas marked by socialism is an integral part of his religious philosophy His sociological enquiry leads him to a new understanding of the caste system and intracaste socialism

It is evident that religion and politics are connected in the realm of ideas But the seats of religious and political powers must be kept poles apart, just as law and justice are connected but the legislative and

The upper classes will no longer be able to repress the lower, try they ever so much. The well-being of the higher classes now lies in helping the lower to get their legitimate rights...

A Brahmin is not so much in need of education as a Chandala. If the son of a Brahmin needs one teacher, that of a Chandala needs ten. For, greater help must be given to him whom nature has not endowed with an acute intellect from birth. It is a madman who carries coals to Newcastle...

Practical Advaitism, which looks upon and behaves to all mankind as one's own soul, was never developed among the Hindus... If ever any religion approached to this equality in an appreciable manner, it is Islam and Islam alone... I am firmly persuaded that without the help of practical Islam, theories of Vedantism, however fine and wonderful they may be, are entirely valueless to the vast mass of mankind... For our own motherland a junction of the two great systems, Hinduism and Islam—Vedanta brain and Islam body—is the only hope. I see in my mind's eye the future perfect India rising out of this chaos and strife, glorious and invincible, with Vedanta brain and Islam body.

Swami Vivekananda

Sah Brothers

603/4 "NIRANJAN" 6TH FLOOR
99, NETAJI SUBHASH ROAD
MUMBAI 400 002

judicial powers are kept separate in a democracy (Ghosh 1990) Consistent is this principle with Vivekananda's instructions to the monks of the Ramakrishna Order—to stay away from politics It is for the householder followers of Vivekananda to take part in politics in order to empower the downtrodden classes

Difference in Focus : *Vivekananda* and *Ambedkar*

VIVEKANANDA spoke to all sections but his focus was more on moving the upper strata of society to feel for and to sympathise with their poor fellow countrymen and then to act in a spirit of service He says (*Complete Works,* Vol 3, pp 297-98)

> To the Brahmanas I appeal, that they must work hard to raise the Indian people by teaching them what they know It was not his (the Brahmin's) fault that he reached ahead of other castes But it is one thing to gain advantage and another thing to preserve it for evil use So this accumulated culture of ages of which the Brahmana has been the trustee, he must now give to the people at large It was because he did not for a thousand years we have been trodden under the heels of everyone who chose to come to India There is an old superstition that if the cobra that bites, sucks out his own poison, the man must survive Well then the Brahmana must suck out his own poison

Well, this is certainly a dose of strong medicine To the lower castes he tells

> This Brahmana, the man of God, he who has known Brahman, the ideal man, the perfect man, must remain We must be bold enough to speak of their defects, but at the same time we must give the credit that is due to them (*Complete Works,* Vol 3, p 293)
>
> this fighting and writing and forthing against the higher castes is in vain, it does no good and this race, unfortunately already divided, is going to be divided more and more The only way to bring about the levelling of caste is to appropriate the culture, the education, which is the strength of the upper castes (*Complete Works,* Vol 3, p 291)

Vivekananda wanted to avoid caste strife, whereas Ambedkar is more militant A bit of strife is nothing to him if it wins human rights for his people The Ambedkar of the early years, when he was demanding separate electorate, mellowed considerably with experience Finally, he settled for legal and constitutional means to emancipate the Dalits and avoided bloodshed His conversion to a religion of *karuna* and *ahimsa* (Buddhism) is significant It is well known that he sent a delegation to Amritsar to study Sikhism and its traditions, he compared Sikhism with Buddhism and finally settled for the latter

While Vivekananda addresses mainly the upper castes, Ambedkar addresses only the Shudras and Dalits (so-called untouchables) He is aware of what I have earlier called "the greatest tragedy of the Indian civilisation" in an earlier section titled Manu Smriti So he launches a movement the key slogan of which is "self-respect" He realises that his people need rituals and priests, but as long as they employ Brahmin priests or even visit temples with Brahmin priests, they would be held in thraldom and cannot assert their equality and self-respect Hence he converts himself and his followers to Buddhism It is a choice very carefully made, although he has other options He wants assertion of human dignity but not strife He wants for his caste an elbow room of freedom but not a gulf of difference from the Hindu society Ambedkar addressed the Dalits to say

> Utilise what little political power is coming into your hands If you are indifferent and do not try to use it properly, your work will have no end The sooner you remove the foolish belief that your miseries were pre-ordinated the better The thought that your poverty is inevitable and is inborn and inseparable is erroneous Abandon this line of thought of considering yourselves to be slaves. (Ambedkar 1932)

Vivekananda was very concerned with preserving the unity of the Hindus Ambedkar was less so Nevertheless, he explained about his intention of conversion to a different religion as follows

> What the consequences of conversion will be to the country as a whole is well worth bearing in mind Conversion to Islam or Christianity will denationalise the depressed classes If they go to Islam, the number of Muslims will be doubled, and the danger of Muslim domination also becomes real If they go to Christianity it will strengthen the hold of Britain on the country On the other hand if they embrace Sikhism, they will not harm the country but they will help the destiny of the country If I have to go to the length of considering Sikhism as an alternative, it is because I feel a certain amount of responsibility for the fate of the Hindus (Ambedkar 1936)

As mentioned earlier, his final choice was Buddhism and not Sikhism

Vivekananda held the same opinion as his guru Ramakrishna Paramahansa who had expressed himself against hasty social reform and reformers (*Gospel of Shri Ramakrishna*)

> Caste restrictions fall away of themselves don't tear them off as those fools (the reformers) do

In contrast, Ambedkar was in a tearing hurry He stated on the question of his anticipated conversion to Buddhism that he would postpone it for five or ten years but on one condition only that

> an Untouchable religious leader Mr S K Sakat must be installed as a Shankaracharya (Jigyasu 1961)

Vivekananda in his acts and speeches constantly violated the edicts of Manu Smriti For instance, he gave the *Upaveeta* (the holy thread) and Vedic education to his Shudra followers, he spoke in favour of intercaste marriage, etc (*Complete Works,* Vol 5, pp 339-41) But he never explicity named the Manu Smriti as the object of his attack Ambedkar made explicit and vitriolic assault on the Manu Smriti He held it responsible for the enslavement of the "low" castes

Ambedkar's Contribution

AMBEDKAR was attracted to Buddhism for several reasons. Its rationality and contempt for authority, as embodied in the two aforesaid principles of enquiry set up by Buddha (see section titled Buddha), must have played an important role He feels that unless the authority of the Vedas and Manu can be challenged, the depressed castes can never regain self-respect The other important factor is the monopoly over priesthood of a particular caste in Hinduism. Ghosh (1995) has called this monopoly as job reservation for the Brahmins in the "sacred sector" of the economy Buddha breached this monopoly or "job reservation" by making a priest out of a monk (Ghosh 1995) This had a tremendous appeal for Ambedkar and he worked tirelessly for the spread of Buddhism in India Ramkete (1983) in his *Revival of Buddhism in Modern India* has given a comprehensive account of Ambedkar's life and works

Ambedkar knew the importance of the past and its heroes for his people So he spent the twilight years of his life in researching the Hindu scriptures in quest of the dignified roots of his people, the Shudras and Dalits of India He wrote two books, *Who are the Shudras* and *Who are the Untouchables* Srinivasan (1996) has written an excellent commentary on his efforts The book on Shudras was dedicated to the memory of Jotiba Phule, described as

> the greatest Shudra of modern India who made the lower classes of Hindus conscious of their slavery

Phule's book *Gulamgiri*, written in Marathi in 1873, is a book on Indian history from the Shudra point of view What Phule tried to do for the Shudras of Maharashtra through his writings, Ambedkar attempted to do for the Shudras and the Untouchables of the whole of India Hence he chose to write in English and made it amply clear that he wrote only for his own caste brethren His books should be judged not for scientific veracity alone but also for their ideological and mythical value for the self-respect movement of his people If the Suryavanshi Rajputs can spin a myth about the Sun God favouring a Rajput woman for the birth of a brave son, *Shiladitya*, then why cannot the Dalits have their own mythology? At any rate, the three books mentioned above written by Phule and Ambedkar reflect a subaltern view of history, perhaps the earliest and most genuine I wonder whether the modern historians of India, who find the subaltern view so attractive, have accorded these books the recognition they deserve

Ambedkar made a comprehensive survey of the Smriti literature in Sanskrit and when he was appointed the Chairman of the Committee for Drafting the Indian Constitution by the Constituent Assembly, he dedicated himself to the task in spite Constituent Assembly, he dedicated himself to the task in spite of his failing health, he knew the implications that he would be producing a Smriti, although he never said so It was said by a member of the Constituent Assembly, H V Kamath, in the context of the Hindu Code Bill piloted by Ambedkar

> As regards the Smritis which are interlinked or interlocked with Dharma, my honourable friend Dr Ambedkar said the other day that there are perhaps 137 Smritis And now we have got the 138th Smriti I hope Dr Ambedkar will pardon me if I refer to this as the Bheem Smriti (*Constituent Assembly Debates,* Vol II, Part II, dated 24 2 49)

I tend to agree with Kamath that Ambedkar's greatest contribution to Indian thought is the so-called Bheem Smriti which shakes the foundations of the inequitous caste system and mounts a frontal assault on the Manu Smriti

It should be noted that the influence of the Manu Smriti was still strong during the closing years of Ambedkar's life in both wings of Pakistan, West and East This was evident in a curious ordinance promulgated in that country In the middle of mayhem and murder, when some Hindu untouchable castes attempted to leave Pakistan, the aforesaid ordinance prevented their departure This led to their forced conversion to Islam If they leave, who would clean the toilets in public places and the Railways, who would drag away unclaimed corpses from the streets, who would maintain the drainage, underground and overground, of the cities? A similar thing happened in Nizam's Hyderabad before its capture by the Indian Army Ambedkar was terribly upset and issued a statement on November 28, 1947

> would like to tell the Schedule Castes who happen today to be impounded inside Pakistan to come over to India by such means as may be available to them it would be fatal for the Scheduled Castes to put their faith in the Muslim League (Ambedkar 1947)

Ambedkar urged Nehru to lodge a protest with Pakistan for promulgating this ordinance but the latter did not comply[3] This was mentioned in a public meeting by Ambedkar on the eve of the elections in October 1951 at Jullundhar city (Bhagwandas 1951)

Conclusions

VIVEKANANDA and Ambedkar—together they signal the beginning of the end of the dominance of the Manu Smriti They played complimentary roles in

(Continued on page 78)

BANGLADESH EXPERIENCE

Corruption of Politics and Politics of corruption

MATIUR RAHMAN

Reports on corruption, misuse of funds, terrorism and all sorts of crimes fill the pages of our newspapers, day after day These reports flood in from all over the country, including the capital city of Dhaka itself We print such news everyday We read such news everyday And almost surely, the reports reveal, it is some political personality, a political leader, worker or supporter who is behind these misdeeds

Almost as a matter of routine, the government in power brings piles of charges against its predecessors From the former Prime Minister to the Prime Minister's relations, the Ministers and others, all must face a barrage of allegations In public meetings, leaders of the ruling party accuse the preceding government of all sorts of corruption Presently, the Awami League Government has filed cases against former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, her son, her brother, former Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali, former Ministers Majedul Haq, Hannan Shah, Rafiqul Islam Miah and others They have been accused of misusing power and other forms of corruption Investigations are being carried out against others too

According to reports, Tk 160 million of the former Prime Minister's Fund remains unaccounted As a consequence, cases may be filed against 80 individuals, including a dozen Ministers (*Daily Sangbad*, November 15, 1996) Inquiries are being made into the alleged corruption involving the misappropriation of Tk 850 million distributed towards the end of the BNP's rule—Tk 520 million in cash and the remaining Tk 330 million as expenditure for wheat (*Daily Sangbad*, December 15, 1996) The papers carry further stories of corruption involving various Ministries and their projects—from the energy Ministry to the Ministry of Civil Aviation, from the Ministry of Religious Affairs to the construction of Jamuna Multipurpose Bridge Sometimes rejoinders and denials follow these reports, sometimes there's no reaction at all

A considerable section of the people doubt whether any of these charges will actually reach a conclusion, whether the trials will be completed, whether any progress will be made in this regard at all However, the people are convinced of one thing—that corruption did occur in several sectors during the BNP's rule Even leaders and supporters of the BNP do not deny this when confronted at an informal level

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Corruption of Politics

IF we go back a bit further, things had not been much better either The military and civilian rule of former President Ershad lasted eight years During this period he, his wife, Ministers and MPs amassed fortunes through misappropriation of funds and corruption Local and foreign agents flourished at that time News of blatant corruption hit the newsstands, at home and abroad Close associates and Ministers of Ershad detailed the methods in which the big deals were cut in those days

When the BNP Government assumed power in 1991, corruption charges were brought against Ershad, his wife Raushan Ershad, Kazi Zafar Ahmed, Shah Moazzem Hossain and other Ministers In fact, Ershad spent the entire period of the BNP's rule in jail There were 21 cases in total against him, 20 of which related to corruption The other was the General Manzur Murder Case He was found guilty in three cases, sentenced to 13 years of imprisonment, had served one term of sentence and is now at large on bail in 16 cases

And yet, in 1996, the BNP leadership tried to reach some sort of an understanding with Ershad by proposing that he would be made the Prime Minister Pressure was brought to bear upon the neutral caretaker government to release Ershad from jail Meanwhile, the Awami League formed the 'consensus' government and ensured that Ershad was granted bail in each of the cases and thus released A question arises here How could the very same court, which refused bail to Ershad in the past, now grant him bail for the very same cases? Does the court's role undergo a permutation with the change in government?

If the Awami League wants to maintain its election commitment of building a corruption-free state and accordingly launches a drive against the corruption of the BNP and its leadership, then its compromise with the most corrupt Ershad is hardly plausible

Likewise, the BNP Government had filed cases against two Mayors of Ershad's regime, Col (retd) Abdul Malek and Naziur Rahman Manju Malek joined the Awami League and contested from the Manikganj constituency in a by-election And though sentenced to imprisonment, Naziur Rahman Manju has been released on special consideration by the government All said, this understanding between the Awami League and the Jatiya Party is surely a clear example of political corruption

There is ample evidence proving that Ershad had amassed a fortune in his overseas bank accounts What we know is perhaps only the tip of the iceberg On July 25, 1995, the second top man of the now defunct bank BCCI, Saleh Naqvi, disclosed in his affidavit in Pennsylvania that Ershad at one time had 13 to 14 million dollars in the bank's branch at Cayman Islands A payment of 10 million dollars, in two instalments, was made to Ershad's other wife, Mariam Mumtaz, from that account These revelations point to the fact that Ershad did indeed have quite a tidy sum abroad There really can be no doubt about it What does the government have to say in this regard?

During the rule of the 1991 caretaker government, we heard that the US investigation firm Fairfax was appointed to gather information in connection with Ershad's financial dealings The investigations continued during the BNP's rule, but suddenly things petered out and nothing more was heard of the Fairfax investigation Can the present government not revive the investigations? We know how in the Philippines, after the fall of Marcos, Corazon Aquino initiated international investigations into the financial holdings of the former President to get back his overseas funds

Let's go a little further back in history Immediately after enforcing Martial Law, Ershad filed corruption cases against the Ministers of the governments of President Zia and Sattar The indicted persons included Moudud Ahmed, Majedul Haq, K M Obaidur Rahman and others Some were even sentenced to various terms of imprisonment Ironically, many of these very same persons became close associates of Ershad Moudud Ahmed had served a prison sentence, and even then he became the Prime Minister and made his way up to the position of Vice-President The BNP Government too had once filed charges against Moudud Ahmed, but likewise Khaleda Zia drew close to him in the subsequent period

One may conclude that while President Zia himself might not have accumulated personal wealth and assets, during the military and civilian rule he had built a corruption-ridden political system He was well aware that his Ministers were involved in corruption He was fully knowledgeable of the fact that the businessmen and industrialists were misappropriating enormous sums of money from the banks

Role of Intelligence Agencies in Corruption

Now, I wish to touch upon a rather sensitive issue, an issue much discussed in the political arena, but always in a covert way It is the role of the intelligence agencies, civilian and military, in connection with our politics and the running of the government

It is no secret that during the regimes of both President Zia and Ershad, the DFI (Defence Forces Intelligence) and the NSI (National Security Intelligence) played a major role in forming political parties, drawing up political programmes, the preparing the lists of leaders, potential MPs and Ministers Both these organisations were provided with ample funds which they used unstintingly in the selling and buying of political leaders, in splitting political parties, forming new ones, and in making Ministers Intelligence agency sources themselves affirm such reports

These two intelligence agencies, the DFI in particular, have played a pivotal role in corrupting the country's politics and politicians They have used all and every means of influencing politicians, luring them, bribing them, threatening them, and subjecting them to all sorts of pressures And it's not just the newer breed of politicians that have danced to the tune of these agencies, even the veterans cooperated with their schemes

No action has ever been taken against these unlawful manipulations of the intelligence agencies We have the right to know whether these agencies have the authority to carry out such underhand political dealings In Pakistan, the ISI (Inter Services Intelligence) is in the dock now, facing a trial at the Supreme Court with regard to its political role, its payment of millions of rupees to the political parties The judges have even questioned as to the why the ISI's political cell should not be closed down Pakistan's former Army chief and head of the ISI had admitted that the allegations were true If this can be done in Pakistan, why not in Bangladesh?

Actually the problem is simple Even Begum Zia's BNP Government functioned in accordance with these agencies' recommendations One cannot rule out the agencies' involvement in the present affairs of the government either

Petty Corruption of the Politicians

Let's look at some recent reports The February 17 issue of the *Daily Sangbad* reports that a former MP of the BNP, Sirujul Islam (Chittagong-10), has been charged with misappropriation of two thousand saris worth Tk 400 thousand He distributed a negligible number of saris and filched the rest With such ample scope of corruption, did he have to deprive a few poor village women of saris?

The September 5 issue of the daily *Bhorer Kagoj* reports that the Telephone Revenue Department has filed cases against 12 former and present MPs of Bogra and Jaipurhat districts for non-payment of bills Ten of these 12 have outstanding bills amounting to Tk 1 37 million in total An even bigger item in the *Bhorer Kagoj* of February 23 revealed that 400 MPs of the third, fourth and fifth parliament have outstanding telephone bills totalling Tk 54 million Ten Ministers of the present Cabinet are also in the list of defaulting telephone subscribers The list contains a large number of big names including former Ministers and political leaders Some of them are not even alive today

To what a degrading degree these politicians have fallen by engaging in rampart corruption! A common subscriber's line would be severed if he is just a month or two overdue in paying his telephone bill But the conniving politicians remain untouched The MPs even get an allowance for their telephone bills They have facilities galore—red passports, duty-free cars, domestic travel allowances, monthly allowances, allocations for office premises in their respective constituencies, and more And still so many of them fail to pay their telephone bills? What example are these representatives setting before the people?

Can the people be blamed if they conclude that the majority of our politicians and MPs are corrupt? Corruption has been there ever since the inception of our independence and throughout the political upheavals and changes Politics and politicians must share the blame to a large extent

Vote-rigging in Elections

Another facet of political corruption lies in the general elections. The law has established that from the last election onwards, all the elections will be held under a neutral caretaker government Why? Because the political parties and their leaders manipulate the votes, rig the results A 'media coup' took place during the 1986 elections False votes were indiscriminately cast in the 1988 elections And the farcical 1996 elections under the BNP Government even shamed the people themselves Had the BNP not resorted to declaring such flagrantly distorted results, perhaps it would have taken a mite longer for them to fall

We recall that in the 1973 general elections, the Awami League had snatched victory away from its opponents in several seats Votes were 'fixed' in the 1979 elections It has come to be accepted, even by the politicians themselves, that elections under a political government controlled by the politicians, can never be fair So the politicians themselves are virtually acknowledging their own dishonesty, admitting that they would manipulate the vote at every possible opportunity One cannot argue with the people if they accuse the politicians of dishonesty

Politics of Arms and Violence

Crooked election practices lead to yet another issue terrorism Terrorists collect extortion money, illegally procure tenders, unlawfully exact payments from businessmen, control bus terminals nationwide It is these terrorists who supply arms to the university campuses, deal in firearms Who are these terrorists? Who provides them shelter? The police knows the answers very well But the terrorists are protected by immensely powerful 'godfathers' These godfathers are the politicians, the MPs and even Ministers

A senior police officer in Chittagong once remarked if only six leaders of the Awami League and the BNP withdrew their support to the terrorists, Chittagong would be more or less free from terrorism The big-time terrorists of Dhaka have links with MPs, both present and past

In the educational institutions of the country, including Dhaka University, terrorists with the status of student leaders continue to engage in violence and extortion They enjoy the full support of the political parties and leaders After all, student leaders are instrumental in their ascension to power! Where will this politics of violence lead us to? The ruling party and the Opposition have a consensus on one issue, and that is the continuance of terrorism on the campus Non-students will remain on campus with arms, violence and politics of terrorism

Who will account for this corruption permeating every inch of our politics—the corruption cases against the Minister and MPs, the manipulation of votes, the unpaid telephone bills and the promotion of the terrorists? Where will this end?

Money and Politics

POLITICS everywhere has direct links with money This link sparks off corruption In order to carry on political activities in their respective areas, to wield influence, to take up various projects before on election, a political worker or leader needs a steady flow of funds The days of the forties or fifties are gone when leaders would use their own limited means to collect funds at a local level to carry out their modest activities If such examples still exist, they are few and far between So, other than the financially sound politicians, most of the political leaders have to rely on wealthy persons, have to depend on them And these moneyed people take full advantage of the situation They provide the politicians with funds, with all sorts of financial assistance in winning the elections As a result, the elected MPs are totally dependent on these rich people The MPs thus work, both in the parliament and outside in their interests, formulate policies in their favour and function in accordance with their directions These wealthy men do not limit their funds to political individuals alone They pour money into the party coffers too. They are often obliged to do so.

I know of an incident when a businessman offered a certain leader one million taka during the 1991 elections, but she refused to accept the meagre amount Another person's donation never reached the actual leader for which he later suffered The business community of the country give more or less equal funds to the Awami League and the BNP

They fund others too, though perhaps on a lesser scale Other than contributing to the central party funds, they also provide finance to individual candidates, to the leaders and the party workers It is in this way that the corrupt moneyed section of the society wield their influence over the major political parties of the country, over the MPs and the government

In the grips of these businessmen, neither the government, nor the Opposition murmur a word about Tk 13,000 crores many of them owe to the banks as defaulters None of the governments has the guts to take action against them

In his affidavit before the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh Salman Rahman, one of the biggest bank defaulters of the country, openly stated that he was very close to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina He helped her in procuring foreign investments and so she was dependent on him He said Finance Minister S A M S Kibria was jealous of this closeness to the PM Interestingly, the PM's Office did not refute his statement In fact, most quarters see truth in Salman Rahman's words

In course of time as the election costs spiral upwards, so does the politicians' dependence on these well-to-do businessmen, on these bank loan defaulters and their wealth A large section of these politicians enter into partnership with these affluent allies, sometimes getting commissions or other facilities It is no secret how fast these politicians, MPs or Ministers become rich The lure of wealth is an impetus for them to remain in politics

Increasing Influence of Businessmen over Politics

GRADUALLY the affinity between politics and money is becoming more and more obvious The influence of affluence grows with the increase in election expense The country's seventh general elections in 1996 revealed that for both the Awami League and the BNP, wealth was the main criterion for candidacy The ideology of the candidates or their past political records hardly counted That is why, just before the elections, businessmen, former civilian and military bureaucrats and others made a mad rush to join either this or that of the two major political parties Without an iota of political experience, many of them made it by virtue of their wealth The number of wealthy business persons in the present parliament exceeds that of any other parliament in the past

According to a survey conducted by political scientist Dr Moniruzzaman Talukdar, after the 1991 elections, 59 per cent of the MPs of the fifth national parliament were business persons Lawyers, teachers, doctors, journalists, student leaders and former government bureaucrats together made up only 36 per cent And of the elected persons in the 1991 elections, 66 per cent of the BNP's MPs, 51 per cent of the Awami League's and 63 per cent of Jatia Party's were business persons Of Khaleda Zia's Ministers, 58 per cent were businessmen and industrialists [See, *Politics and Security of Bangladesh* by Muniruzzaman Talukdar, UPL, pages 152-153] The present seventh national parliament remains unchanged in character

In the parliament of 1973, only 24 per cent were from the business community In 1954 this figure was only four per cent. Lawyers, on the other hand, constituted 55 per cent of the 1954 House. In 1973, lawyers accounted for 26 per cent only and this figure plunged to 19 per cent in the 1991 parliament. These have been revealed in the book written by political scientist Raunaq Jahan [*Bangladesh Politics Problems and Issues* by Rounaq Johan, VPL, pages 143-16]

Such data shows that politicians, MPs and the government depend more and more on wealthy business persons. It is only natural then that they will have a strong say in the running of the country, in the formulation of policies.

Financial Management of Political Parties

THE next disturbing issue is the size of funds belonging to the parties, to the MPs and the candidates. What is their expenditure, how do they spend?

The political parties are not transparent concerning their funds. In an investigative report on the subject (published in two instalments in *The Daily Star*, May 28 and 31, 1997), young reporter Aisuzzaman stated that though the major political parties had bank accounts, the sources of their funds remained secret. Their accounts were poorly managed. Hardly any record of income and expenditure was maintained. Party leaders and workers are evasive of the sources of their funds. The flimsy explanations they offer are barely plausible while the report reveals that it is the small and big businessmen who fund the parties.

The big parties always need big funds to finance workers, run their office, hold regular meetings, rallies, and processions, bring out leaflets and publications and so on. Every party claims that it creates funds with collections from the general members of the party and donations from the salaries of Ministers and MPs. But this is not likely to cover the huge amounts the major parties spend. Reporter Aisuzzaman observed that there were serious suspicions concerning the funding sources of each and every party. They have admitted that other than collections from the general members and well-wishers, businessmen do make contributions from time to time. Even the businessmen themselves told the *Daily Star* reporter that they would regularly or irregularly make contributions to the political parties. Many of them had fixed budgets for the purpose. They provided financial assistance for various activities, functions and for elections. By this process they establish their hold over the political parties. Some do this as supporters of the party, others in their own business interests.

Many political analysts are of the opinion that foreign sources also provide funds to various political parties. Political forces of the country too, directly and indirectly, level such charges against one another. The matter is even discussed among the political leadership. Intelligence agency sources do not refute such allegations either. A leader of one of the large political parties recently told me quite frankly that his party receives funds from several countries of the Middle East.

Anyway, it is only natural for the people to raise questions regarding the finance, funds and budgets of the parties. The people, the voters, have a right to know how the parties which they support acquire and spend the funds. But these matters are not only concealed from the public, many of the leaders, even the treasurers, are in the dark about the funding details. No accounts are discussed during the council or central committee meetings of the parties. Leaders of various levels collect and spend funds on their own accord. This leads us to believe that a certain amount of malpractice regarding funds takes place at all levels of the party. But the main fund of the party remains with the chief. The chief has the ultimate say and is answerable to none. Just as the parties are run on most undemocratic lines, the funds are maintained in an equally undemocratic fashion. This is the most guarded secret, the most sensitive issue of any party. Is there anybody to disclose the corruption within parties concerning their finances?

Election Expenditure

POLITICAL parties spend immense sums of money during general elections. With every election, the expenditure of the parties and the candidates is increasing in leaps and bounds. This trend has no signs of reversal, and so the parties have turned their attention to the wealthier candidates.

The parties do have central funds for election expenses. These funds are used for various organisational work and campaign purposes. The candidates who are financially less sound are provided allocations from this fund. Outside of the central fund, the top leaders create funds for themselves and for their supporters. And the well-to-do candidates don't just bear their own election expenses, but also make significant contribution to the party fund. Thus throughout the election period money flows like water.

The Awami League and the BNP are said to have spent hundreds of millions of takas during the last two elections, in 1991 and 1996, reaching an estimated amount of more or less Tk 5000 million Perhaps a research institute could find out the exact amount They could delve on the source of the funds too We, the people, would certainly welcome such an effort

Another question arises here How much does a candidate, whether defeated or victorious, spend in the election? The Election Commission has laid down the rule that no candidate is entitled to spend more than Tk 300,000 on his or her election campaign But who bothers to adhere to this rule? No one, I would say The account of expenditure which they submit at the end of the election is certainly concocted We know of a candidate who had spend Tk 20 million in the last election Many have admitted to have spent five or ten million We have also heard of a candidate having no source of income, an extremely honest person, even he had spent one and a half million taka for the election Another honest contestant spent two million Yet each and all of them submit statements showing an expenditure of Tk 300,000 only And, according to sources in the Election Commission, 182 candidates haven't even submitted statements of their expenditures as yet Thirtyfour of them have been asked to show cause for their failure to submit their accounts, and cases have been filed against 17 The person who contests the election may one day be a policy-maker Surely he should abide by the laws If 300 thousand is a ridiculously low sum for election expenditure, let the rules be changed

Do the political parties and leaders have to repay their obligations to the wealthy business persons and industrialists who have so generously provided finds during the elections?

The businessmen's interests lie in their business, their money, their assets In exchange of their donations to the politicians, they expect business by any means, fair or foul They want policies formulated in their interests If the politicians fail to provide them with what they want, they pressurise them, threaten them And the governments bow to their demands Neither the government nor the Opposition parties have the power or the strength to break this hold This is where corruption creeps in The politicians cannot do without money They'll need even more in the future So a tug-of-war begins Who can exact the most? Who can retain a hold on the wealthier supporters? Perhaps it is the businessmen, the industrialists and the bank loan defaulters who are the actual victors in this race

In less developed countries, the people often discuss corruption They bitterly criticise the corruption of the government and the political parties But time has made them rather apathetic to the issue Most people have simply accepted that corruption cannot be uprooted or controlled in any way They have become disillusioned on seeing that those who are supposed to control corruption are, in fact, breeding corruption themselves This is evident every time a new government is installed and that brings a string of charges against the preceding government

Can Corruption be Controlled?

Of course, corruption exists in all societies But when corruption assumes such massive proportions that it poses a threat to the society or the state, then it means there is certainly something really wrong in the political leadership that is running the government

What steps can be taken to control this all-devouring corruption? Ways and means must be found out as to how, through which process, this corruption can be brought under control, can be drastically reduced

We can turn our attention to four basic aspects for the elimination of corruption from the state and the social system 1 Reforms in the political process of the country 2 Restructuring and reorientation of the government's administrative machinery 3 Empowerment of the people 4 Mounting public pressure

In the prevailing circumstances, we cannot bring forth any proposal regarding the reform of the political process which may be sensitive to the political leadership Yet it has become imperative to create an environment where honest and sincere persons are encouraged to enter politics, not just for the sake of controlling corruption, but also for the overall development of the country This environment can be brought about by effecting certain changes in the running and management of the political parties, with emphasis on democracy and transparency The political parties shall have transparency and accountability if they run on generally accepted democratic lines, if there is the provision to audit the funds This will also curtail pressure from unscrupulous business persons

Such steps will assist in controlling corruption Ways should be explored as to how honest candidates can emerge victorious in the elections The government can allocate funds to the parties in proportion to the seats won Such a system exists in several countries A system can even be devised such that business persons can provide funds openly

A code of conduct can be drawn up for the elected MPs and Ministers The people must be given an account of their wealth, their assets They must be given the facilities to enable them to carry out their responsibilities with due efficiency The present government, upon assuming power, had called upon all Ministers to submit accounts of their assets But that is all that we have heard Many Ministers did not give full account of their assets, many refused That is as far as the matter went

This discourse will not take up the topic of administrative reforms and restructuring which are essential for the prevention of corruption I would like to highlight the issue of empowerment of the people The steps adopted by the government to quell corruption will only succeed if they gain public support So the people must be made aware of their rights, of what they are entitled to get from the state Only then will they be able to monitor whether they are getting their due, whether power is being misused or not They will be conscious of these matters That is why I am emphasising the point of people's empowerment

To bring this about, the first measure must be to overhaul the age-old Official Secrecy Act Unless this is done, the people will not get to know anything The right to information must be a part of any democratic society But politicians and bureaucrats are not particularly in favour of such views

Another point must also be brought to light On an individual plane, there are many honest and diligent persons in the government and the administration We may highlight their activities as examples before the society We know of such persons in the present government Such persons were present in the past governments too Even among businessmen there are many who try, as far as possible, to adhere to the rules and regulations in conducting their business They are succeeding and they should be taken as role-models

The media can play a particularly significant role in people's empowerment and in motivating the people against corruption The media has already begun to play a role in this regard It has tried in the past too But we, who are actively involved in the effort, also realise that we do not get any response from the major political parties or from the civil society This can be quite frustrating at times

Initiatives for public interest litigations may be taken in the prevention and control of corruption This is being mobilised to some extent at present In India, it is the public interest litigation of certain journalists which has started the onslaught against corrupt leaders of the country, which has made the Supreme Court take action against these leaders But the people's support and strength must be there

Who will Bell the Cat?

A lot of things could be done about this issue of politics and corruption, but the question remains who will bell the cat?

There are a few ways in which significant progress can be made in controlling corruption One way is that if the political crisis reaches such a point which brings about a radical political change, then perhaps a new leadership will emerge The leadership will be committed to uproot corruption from the entire system We have had such an experience Albeit for a short time We can cite the regime under the Acting President, Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed During that period he had taken certain bold steps which would be unthinkable for any political government But now we do not foresee any such changes ahead

The second way is to create public awareness to reform the present corruption-ridden system This too will not yield much result It may bring about changes here and there but will not usher in an overall change We cannot expect much from the present leadership of the main political parties

But, not far away, we do have yet another example In Singapore, under the leadership of Lee Kwan Yew, an entirely corrupt system has been transformed into an almost entirely corruption-free one In recent years, radical changes under Corazon Aquino and Fidel Ramos have been effected in the Philippines The people's trust on the economy has been restored Unlike Marcos and Imelda, Ramos' reputation remains untainted by accusations of corruption or dishonesty

In our country we do have politicians, personalities and administrators who are capable of establishing a rule of law and bringing corruption under control We have had experience of such a rule, twice in fact—once under the caretaker government of Justice Shahabuddin Ahmed in 1991 and then under Justice Mohammed Habibur Rahman in 1996 But they are not politicians They will not join any party, nor contest any election It is the politicians who will run the government

Honest leadership can certainly bring about revolutionary changes in the country We have seen how Nelson Mandela ushered in historic changes in South Africa's politics and economy It is awe-inspiring to see so many leaders, from Vice-President Thabo Mbeki to the apartheid Whites, now lining up before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission headed by the Noble Laureate, Desmond Tutu Here they confess their past misdeeds, repent for the oppression and killings which they had instigated against the anti-apartheid leaders and activists

Can we expect any such commitment from our political leadership? Our reply will almost certainly be a categoric 'no' Then what will we do? Will we simply sit back and wait for such a leader to arrive on the scene, a leader who will try his or her best to establish a corruption-free society?

Here comes the issue of the civil society's role By now it is evident that any initiative for change will not be taken by the government or political parties As it is, the government and the Opposition are at loggerheads once again, on the verge of taking to the streets in clashes and conflicts So for the time being, there is no alternative but for the civil society to mobilise public opinion against corruption in the state machinery and in the society, to establish a reasonably tolerable environment in the country

At present, a certain amount of awareness concerning rights has grown in some sections of the society Awareness concerning gender rights has certainly come to the forefront So it is true that the people can create pressure to mobilise change, however small the change may be

What if the civil society fails to take this initiative? We will have to wait Till then, we will simply survive, struggling for existence in a sick and stagnant environment ■

[Read at a seminar organised by the
Bangladesh Unnayan Parishad
(Dhaka, September 17, 1997)]

GHOSH Buddha, Vivekananda, Ambedkar

(Continued from page 70)

reforming the Hindu society Vivekananda exhorted the upper castes to atone for their sins in denying the Shudras human dignity Ambedkar staked all, he neglected even his health and the welfare of his family, to awaken the Shudras and Dalits from a stupor persisting over millennia Vivekananda made an ethical connection of socialism with Hindu-Buddhist compassionate spirituality, whereas Ambedkar gave history to a historyless section of our people and a modern Smriti to the whole of Indian society I am referring, of course, to the Indian Constitution, After H.V. Kamath, I am inclined to call it by a second time—Bhim Smriti ■

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FOOTNOTES

1 Gandhi gave *ahimsa* a different meaing, in recent times, by linking it with *satyagraha,* a form of non-violent political protest

2 Buddha was served with pork by a cobbler He developed stomach ailment and died He was 80 at that time

3 From what I observe today, the caste system with all its detestable features and unrevokable hierarchy is quite prevalent in the Muslim society of Uttar Pradesh, and by inductive inference it must be so also in Pakistan In the last 50 years what was the fate of these untouchable castes of Pakistan who were barred from emigrating to India and whose cause Ambedkar took up? In the absence of information I can only speculate Most of them must have been converted to Islam A few may still be continuing as Hindus Muslim or Hindu, they must be doing the same menial jobs of cleaning and scavenging This is the inevitable scenario in a static and feudalistic society of that country where landlords still hold sway over large tracts

On the one hand, there is no religious sanction to the caste system On the other, it is forbidden to talk about caste although it has a presence, widespread and deep There is no reservation for the scavenging castes in the Legislatures and so any mechanism for empowering these enslaved people is totally absent The net effect is likely to be a group of forgotten people who live almost like the subterranean underclass, envisaged by H G Wells, minus their brawn (*vide* his famous science fiction *Time Machine*)

Urdu Language : A Victim of Indian History

C P. BHAMBRI

The partition of India had many negative consequences for the Pakistani and Indian society, and one of the victims of such *'negativism'* was Urdu, a purely Indian and extremely creative language Mohammad Ali Jinnah killed Urdu in East Bengal and weak and opportunistic secular parties neglected Urdu in North India A few important points about the development of any language may be made to situate the neglect of Urdu language in independent India

1 First, market acts as a push and pull factor for the growth or neglect of a language Urdu cannot get encouragement from the economic transactional market But it can get great patronage from the cultural market of India The popular Indian cinema depends a lot on story writers and poets and others who have great knowledge of Urdu But if the pipeline of supply is blocked, there is no prospect of Rahi Masoom Razas and Naushads to emerge And if the audience is not trained in the nuances of the language, *qawwali* and *ghazal* will also die

2. The Hindu communal forces on the one hand and weak, vacillating and opportunist secular forces on the other have created an atmosphere for the decline of Urdu, and this is irrespective of the fact that the reasons of the BJP and such secularists are quite different Why is Urdu dependent on politics? In a multilingual country, languages have to be legitimised by public opinion and political parties For example, the DMK in Tamil Nadu spearheaded the movement for the Tamil language while in Andhra Pradesh the Telugu Desam party has taken over the cause of Telugu. Similarly, in Karnataka all the major political parties have championed the cause of Kannadiga The same is the story about Hindi Urdu received a very weak political support in independent India

3 *In Northern India, Urdu has completely vanished due to the anti-Urdu conspiracies of the fascist Hindu and chauvinist Hindi forces There is no arrangement of Urdu teaching at any level in the Northern Indian States As a result three post-independent generations of Muslims in India are devoid of any knowledge of Urdu No doubt then that for the third Muslim generation, the problem of Urdu is no problem at all It is ironical to note that under the category of one modern language in the three-language formula, Sanskrit, instead of Urdu, is taught as a modern Indian language And, surprisingly, no voice of protest from any corner, not even from the Urdu language champions, has been ever raised*

4 Gandhi and Nehru had a language policy, known as *"Hindustani"* where Hindi and Urdu would have become indispensable twins The Constituent Assembly of India, in spite of Nehru, accorded recognition to Hindi by one vote against Hindustani.

5 Hindi and Urdu as natural twins were separated by the politics of religion and backward-caste politics of the Lohia Socialists in North India Hindi was appropriated by high-caste Hindus and also the champions of backward-caste rural peasantry in UP and Bihar

6 The weak secular parties, like the Congress in UP and Bihar, did not play any active role in promoting Urdu as a second language In the 1980s and 1990s the Janata Dal accorded respectability to the Urdu language Even this was done in a very half-hearted manner

7 Elite perception of education has changed and no public school has shown any interest in Urdu *The*

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Speak

Speak, for your two lips are free,
Speak, your tongue is still your own,
This straight body is yours still—
Speak, before its breath is gone

See how in the blacksmith's forge
Flames leap high and steel glows red,
Padlocks opening wide their jaws,
Every chain's embrace outspread!

This short hour is time enough,
Now till body and tongue lie dead,
Speak, for truth is living yet—
Speak whatever must be said

Faiz Ahmed Faiz

(translated from the original Urdu by VG Kiernan) *government maintained only a few schools in some parts of the Southern Indian States which are catering to the lower middle classes and with very poor infrastructure.* The Muslim minority institutions also have very poor academic standards. The result is whatever little teaching of Urdu is undertaken, it is of very poor quality because *the Indian elite has abandoned Urdu*

8 Uptil 1989, during the Congress rule, the issue of Urdu did surface occasionally, but after 1989 when the Janata Dal came to power, the issue of Urdu was shelved forever Before the 1989 general elections the ruling Congress Government, during its last session in the UP Assembly, had approved a bill to make Urdu the second official language of the State, but the Hindu upper-caste lobby in the Congress, in consonance with the Nagri Pracharini Sabha, managed to obtain a "stay" from the Allahabad High Court, and thereby stopped the implementation of this bill The case is still pending Meanwhile, neither any political body nor any Urdu organisation has ever tried to revoke it.

◆

THE upshot of the above discussion is that a conspiracy of factors has worked against Urdu because it was disowned or very weakly accepted by the political class

A rich and creative language like Urdu has a bleak future unless *elite academic institutions* make provision for its teaching The so-called exclusive Urdu medium schools can only be a non-starter as promoters of the language because of their overall poverty and underdevelopment *The growth and development of Urdu in India depends solely upon voluntary Muslim organisations, for which they will have to undertake the difficult task of building political pressure* What needs to be done is to begin a fresh struggle for the rights and appropriate status of Urdu *Nevertheless, to achieve a desirable and positive result, what is needed is that the so-called Urdu champions who are associated with government and semi-government organisations, and who care for self-benefits, in short, the pro-establishment Muslims, should be kept at a distance* ■

D BANDYOPADHYAY Panchayats and Personnel

(Continued from page 56)

was the delivery of goods and services "Rulers" had to be "Managers" Unknowingly all the principles of "management by objective" got introduced Sadly it was hardly recognised and therefore very little practised often resulting in non-fulfilment of both the objectives and targets

With the deepening and widening of the democratic process at the district level and below and with the plans, programmes, projects, schemes generated from below the role of the bureaucracy would change again from the manager to that of the facilitator, inovator, technical consultant, even motivator But this would not happen on its own To perform this role effectively, there has to be not only attitudial change but also serious upgradation of skills and knowledge of the bureaucracy Thus reorientation of the bureaucracy is an essential component of decentralised and participative system of governance That might make even the diarchy function smoothly

All these and many others can happen provided the political establishment in the States and the Centre so desire genuinely With the appropriate desire all roadblocks would vanish In the absence of it many more obstacles would appear The issue is: how deeply are we committed to the concept of democracy at the grassroots? ■

Based on a paper presented at the All India Conference on Panchayats (Thiruvananthapuram, November 3-4, 1997) jointly organised by the Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi and the Institute of Management in Government (Thiruvananthapuram)

SANJOY GHOSE Rural Employment

(Continued from page 61)

resources to commit to establish significant processing and procurement infrastructure in the heartland, envisages a gradual shift towards small stock on the way to marginalisation, and becoming part of the casual labour force

This paper has been written from the perspective of a practitioner, and not a planner, and does not address the rhetorical question, so what? Solutions, just as the problems, are to be found in the micro contexts This is only an attempt at setting the terms of the debate, and to establish the nature of the differences between policy and practice ■

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BOOK REVIEW

Kashmir : Beyond the Black and White Appraisal

AJIT BHATTACHARJEA

The Challenge in Kashmir by Sumantra Bose, Sage Publications, pp 210, Rs 125

Lal Chowk is the nerve-centre of Srinagar, a barometer of Kashmiri opinion It is spacious but could not accommodate the huge crowd that gathered to welcome Jawaharlal Nehru after Jammu and Kashmir acceded to India In sharp contrast, it was deserted on Republic Day 1992 when the then BJP President, Murli Manohar Joshi, raised the flag surrounded only by his escort of soldiers, guns at the ready

That was the low point in Kashmiri attitudes to their association with India Under President's Rule, with no local representation, the security forces were free to deploy force or the threat of force at will This was justified because of Pakistan's involvement in training in and supply of weapons and other equipment, as well as monetary inducements, to Kashmiri militants Pakistan was also blamed for financing and inducting experienced foreign guerillas, primarily from Pakistan itself and Afghanistan, into the Valley

The Indian authorities were persuaded to view the conflict as primarily a war against an external enemy calling for maximum deployment of strength, and with no risks to be taken The Valley became a battleground, with the unhappy inhabitants caught in the crossfire between the security forces and the militants Since some were suspected of sympathising with the militants, they were treated roughly A few members of the security forces exploited the opportunity for theft, rape and other forms of cruelty

In the atmosphere of mutual distrust, little effort was made to discriminate between those sympathising with the militants and the rest of the population, which heightened the antagonism against the security forces, They responded with heavy-handed cordon and search operations It was a vicious circle

The reviewer, a veteran journalist, is currently the Director of the Press Institute of India, New Delhi He is a keen observer of the Kashmir events, and his book— Kashmir The Wounded Valley*—presented an objective analysis of contemporary developments in the Valley (A review of that book by Nikhil Chakravartty appeared in the* Mainstream *Annual 1994)*

A stroll through Lal Chowk last October, however, indicated that the suspicion had eased It was apple season and the Chowk was full of apple vendors Among the buyers were individual men of the security forces, guns carelessly slung over their shoulders, bargaining for apples like everyone else There was no sign of tension, they were not using their authority to seize what they wanted A tour of the city and its environs confirmed the impression of relaxation Pahalgam and Gulmarg were open to tourists after seven years

◆

NEWSPAPER articles can focus on the immediate, they thrive on tension and conflict But academic studies are expected to try to comprehend the volatile ups and downs to which Kashmir seems to be fated To visualise it in terms of the brutality and antagonism of a period of foreign-inspired terror and state counter-terror is to distort the picture Sumantra Bose echoes the feelings, and writings, of many in this country who have been outraged by the evidence of excesses committed by the security forces But he is carried away by the force of his indignation As a result, exaggerated charges in sweeping terminology tend to vitiate the credibility of his findings They also suggest that the mutual antagonism is permanent

As a student of Columbia University, Bose did the field research for *The Challenge in Kashmir* between 1993 and 1995, to return for a brief visit in 1996 He visited several towns and rural areas in the Valley and interviewed critics of the regime This suggests some degree of freedom Yet he writes on page 60

> By converting the Kashmir Valley, as well as Doda district in Jammu division, into a vast prison for its people, where no rule of law exists and the most elementary humanitarian and civil norms are systematically violated by the 'security' forces, the authorities in New Delhi have

> managed to completely discredit India's claim, in Kashmiri eyes, of being a democratic and secular state

Domestic civil rights organisations have drawn attention to the crimes committed by men of the security forces, including torture, rape and executions Journalists have written about them But to talk sweepingly in terms of

> recurrent massacres of civilians, widespread torture, numerous instances of reported gang and mass rape, summary executions of hundreds, perhaps thousands of detained youth,

etc is to help to cast doubt on the accuracy of specific charges The role of the Indian media in drawing attention to excesses and insisting on recognition of human rights is also overlooked Yet this is an essential part of the democratic process

Bose's thesis is based on exaggerated and generalised accounts of the conduct of the security forces This leads him to the conclusion that

> these practices are not aberrations Rather all these forms of abuse are integral components, or at least inevitable extensions, of a systematic policy

He insists that the security force personnel are rarely punished for crimes, and if punished, the nature of punishment is rarely made public He is either not aware of, or overlooks, the fact that in response to criticism, the Army has changed its procedures and publicised the names of offenders and the punishment meted out

This black and white appraisal makes it hard to comprehend the greys that are appearing on the Kashmir scene The perceptible air of relaxation between the security forces and the people of the Valley cannot be explained in the picture of unmitigated brutality painted in the book Disturbing reports of excesses are still heard, but they do not seem to disturb the trend towards relaxation

From the premises of the book, it is still more difficult to explain the peaceful elections to the State Legislature in September 1996 and the return to office the following month of the Farooq Abdullah Government Bose returned to the Valley to view the elections and finds them genuine enough to draw conclusions about political trends in the State

One would agree with him that most Kashmiris still want independence or at least the high degree of autonomy in the Indian Union they were promised but denied Also that it would be dangerous and delusory to interpret popular fatigue with the years of militancy and counter-militancy as acceptance of the status quo Without genuine moves towards regaining the degree of autonomy Kashmir enjoyed when it acceded to India, the stage may be set for another uprising ■

NEW BOOKS ON COMPARATIVE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

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Profile of Urdu under Census 1991

SYED SHAHABUDDIN

Census of India 1991—Series I—India Paper-I of 1997 on Language (which has just been published) indicates that Urdu is steadily declining in all Urdu-speaking States. In other words, it is dying a slow death, though it still retains its pan-Indian character as no other Scheduled, far less a Non-Scheduled, Language does. According to the Census, it ranks sixth, after Hindi, Bengali, Telugu, Marathi and Tamil in the number of persons who declared it as their Mother Tongue. Table 1 shows the relative pattern of the languages which were declared as their Mother Tongue by at least one per cent of the total national population.

TABLE 1
Scheduled Languages in Descending Order of Strength, 1991

Language	*Persons who returned their Mother Tongue*	*Percentage to total population*
Hindi	337,272,114	39.85
Bengali	69,595,738	8.22
Telugu	66,017,615	7.80
Marathi	62,481,681	7.38
Tamil	53,006,368	6.26
Urdu	43,406,932	5.13
Gujarati	40,673,814	4.81
Kannada	32,753,676	3.87
Malayalam	30,377,176	3.59
Oriya	28,061,313	3.32
Punjabi	23,378,744	2.76
Assamese	13,079,969	1.55

Urdu has the same position that it had in 1971 and 1981, except that while the proportion of Hindi has grown from 38.04 to 38.71 to 39.85, that for Urdu has gone *down* from 5.22 to 5.11 to 5.13, as may be seen from Table 2.

Before further analysis, we have to make a basic assumption: Urdu has become synonymous with Muslim Indians. Though it is not the Mother Tongue of all Muslim Indians, almost all those who declare it as the Mother Tongue are Muslim Indians.

The author, a former Member of Parliament, is the editor of Muslim India

TABLE 2
Comparative Strength of Scheduled Languages, 1971, 1981 and 1991

Language	*Percentage to total population*		
	1971	*1981*	*1991*
Hindi	38.04	38.71	39.85
Bengali	8.17	7.51	8.22
Telugu	8.16	7.41	7.80
Marathi	7.62	7.24	7.38
Tamil	6.88	**	6.26
Urdu	5.22	5.11	5.13

**Full figures for Tamil for 1981 are not available as the census records for Tamil Nadu were lost due to floods. Therefore, percentage to total population is not given.

The Case of Hindi

As Table 3 would show, the Census includes under Hindi nearly 104 million persons (to be exact 103,839,829) who have not declared Hindi *per se* as the Mother Tongue but other languages which are akin to or associated with Hindi or considered to be its dialects.

It is interesting to note that if, these non-Hindi languages were taken out of the count, the proportion of Hindi would fall from its inflated level of 39.85 per cent to 27.58 per cent. This would still be much higher than the corresponding figure for the next most widely spoken language, Bengali, with only 8.22 per cent. What is important is the likelihood that many Urdu-speaking persons in the areas where these non-Hindi languages (included under Hindi) are spoken, would have declared the latter and thus been included under Hindi. But there is no way to check this hypothesis.

State-wise Distribution of Urdu

Only eight States, namely, AP, Bihar, Karnataka, MP Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, UP and West Bengal have more than one million Urdu speakers. Next in importance fall five States Gujarat, Haryana, Orissa, Rajasthan and Delhi which have more than 100,000 but less than 1,000,000 speakers. But Urdu is spoken in all States and UTs and outranks Hindi in three major States, namely AP, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu (See Table 4)

TABLE 3
Languages Specified in the Eighth Schedule (Scheduled Languages), 1991

Language	*Total No of Speakers*	*No of Speakers of Main Language*	*No of Speakers of Associated Non-Scheduled Languages (above 1 million)*	
Hindi	337,272,114	233,432,285	Bengali/Baghelkhandi	1,387,160
			Bhojpuri	23,102,050
			Bundeli/Bundelkhandi	1,657,473
			Chattisgarhi	10,595,199
			Garhwali	1,872,578
			Harauti	1,235,252
			Khortha/Khotta	1,049,655
			Kumauni	1,717,191
			Lamani/Lambadi	2,054,537
			Magadhi/Magahi	10,566,842
			Maithili	7,766,597
			Malvi	2,970,103
			Marwari	4,673,276
			Mewari	2,114,622
			Nimadi	1,420,051
			Pahari	2,179,832
			Rajasthani	13,328,581
			Surgujia	1,045,455
			Others	13,103,375
			Total	103,839,829

TABLE 4

State	*Hindi*	*Urdu*
AP	1 84	5 56
Karnataka	0 89	4 48
Tamil Nadu	0 16	1 04

Decadal Growth Rate

URDU'S decadal growth rate is considerably lower than Hindi as may be seen from Table 6

Let us examine the growth rate of Muslim and Urdu-spoken population in the Hindi-speaking States

It is interesting to note that while the decadal rate of growth of the Muslim population in the Hindi-speaking states and non-Hindi Urdu States and the country as a whole during 1981-91 is 26 21, 22 22 and 27 22, the rate of the growth of the Urdu-speaking population in the Hindi-speaking States and the country as a whole is much less at 18 93, and 22 89 respectively while in the non-Hindi Urdu States, it is higher at 28 38 This supports the hypothesis that for one reason or the other, by choice or by compulsion of circumstances, the Muslim community in the Hindi-speaking States is distancing itself from Urdu to the advantage of Hindi, specially in Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh On the other hand, in the non-Hindi Urdu States, the Urdu rate of growth parallels the Muslim rate, except in Gujarat Urdu is thus under assimilation in the Hindi States The trend is the same even in relatin to the rate of growth of the total population between 1981-91 This may be seen in Table 7

TABLE 5
Relative Position of Urdu and Hindi, Hindi-Speaking and Non-Hindi 'Urdu' States

State	*Hindi*	*Urdu*	
AP	3	2	
Bihar	1	2	
Goa	5	4	(after Konkani, Marathi & Kannada)
Gujarat	3	4	(after Gujarati, Marathi & Hindi)
Haryana	1	3	(after Hindi, Punjabi)
HP	1	2	(neg)
Karnataka	7	2	
MP	1	3	(after Hindi, Marathi)
Maharashtra	2	3	(after Marathi, Hindi)
Orissa	2	3	(after Oriya, Hindi)
Rajasthan	1	2	
Tamil Nadu	Neg	4	(after Tamil, Telugu & Kannada)
UP	1	2	
West Bengal	2	3	(after Bengali, Hindi)
Chandigarh	1	3	(Neg after Hindi, Punjabi,
Delhi	1	3	(after Hindi, Punjabi)

TABLE 6

Language	*Decadal Growth Rate* 1971-81	1981-91
Hindi	26 86	27 51
Bengali	14 52	35 67
Telugu	13 11	30 41
Marathi	18 41	26 35
Tamil	—	—
Urdu	22 08	24 23

This hypothesis is further confirmed by Table 8 related to major 'Urdu' States

Indeed, except for Bihar, Karnataka, Maharashtra and AP with the highest coefficients of Urduisation are non-Hindi states The case of UP needs to be taken note of because in UP lives 22 61 of the total

TABLE 7

Growth Rate of Urdu in 'Hindi' States, 1991

State/UT	1991		1981		Growth Rate 1981-91		
	Total Population	Urdu Population	Total Population	Urdu Population	Total Population	Urdu Population	Muslim Population
Hindi States							
Bihar	86 374	8 543	69 915	6 956	23 54	22 81	29 50
Haryana	16 466	0 262	12 922	0 227	27 43	15 42	45 89
Himachal Pradesh	5 171	0 008	4 281	0 013	20 79	(-) 38 46	28 04
Madhya Pradesh	66 181	1 228	52 179	1 131	26 83	5 58	31 21
Rajasthan	44 006	0 954	34 262	0 725	28 44	31 59	41 46
UP	139 112	12 493	110 862	10 767	25 48	16 03	35 78
Chandigarh	0 642	0 005	0 452	0 003	42 04	66 67	91 73
Delhi	9 421	0 513	6 220	0 363	51 46	41 32	84 64
Total	**367 373**	**24 006**	**291 093**	**20 185**	**26 21**	**18 93**	**24 82**
Non-Hindi-Urdu States							
AP	66 508	5 560	53 550	4 169	24 20	33 37	30 66
Gujarat	41 310	0 548	24 086	0 609	21 19	(-) 10 02	24 05
Karnataka	44 977	4 480	37 136	3 513	21 11	27 53	27 52
Maharashtra	78 937	5 735	62 784	4 319	25 73	32 79	31 40
Orissa	31 660	0 502	26 370	0 372	20 06	34 95	36 83
Tamil Nadu	55 859	1 037	48 408	0 865	15 39	19 88	21 14
West Bengal	68 078	1 456	54 581	1 200	24 73	21 33	36 89
	387 329	**19 318**	**316 915**	**15 047**	**22 22**	**28 38**	34 38
India	846 368	43 407	665 288	35 323	27 22	22 89	32 80

Muslim population of the country and yet the coefficient there is as low as 52, though those in MP, Rajasthan and Haryana are even lower But both the Muslim and Urdu population are much smaller in them.

TABLE 8

State/UT	% of Muslim Population	% of Urdu Population	Coeffective of Urduisation
AP	8 91	12 81	58
Bihar	14 80	19 68	69
Gujarat	8 73	1 26	
Haryana	4 64	0 60	18
Karnataka	11 63	10 32	86
MP	4 96	2 83	37
Maharashtra	9 66	13 21	75
Rajasthan	8 01	2 20	27
Tamil Nadu	5 47	2 39	
UP	17 33	28 78	52
Delhi	9 44	1 18	58

Assuming that within the Hindi-speaking States there was a one-to-one relationship between Muslims and Urdu, the Urdu-speaking population in the country goes up to 64 68 million as may be seen from Table 9

This forms 7 71 per cent of the total national population and elevates Urdu, above Marathi and Tamil, to the fourth position after Hindi, Bengali and Telugu

In the Hindi-speaking States, as a matter of state policy, the educational system and mass media have been deliberately and effectively used to Hindi-ise in the Urdu-speaking population The younger generation has been largely deprived of the opportunity to learn Urdu and, as such, it knows no other language except Hindi, though, in its speech and writing, it may continue to use many Urdu words of Persian and Arabic origin Thus Urdu has been sought to be reduced to a spoken dialect of Hindi and sentenced to a slow lingering death—a process of painful or painless linguistic assimilation, depending upon one's point of view ■

TABLE 9

	Total Muslim Population in Hindi States (in millions)	Urdu-population as declared in Non-Hindi States (in millions)
UP	24 11	12 50
Bihar	12 79	8 54
Rajasthan	3 53	0 95
MP	3 28	1 23
Haryana	0 76	0 27
Delhi	0 89	0 51
Total	**45 36**	**24 00**
AP	5 92	5 56
Karnataka	5 23	4 48
Maharashtra	7 63	5 73
Gujarat	3 61	0 55
Orissa	0 58	0 50
Tamil Nadu	3 05	1 04
West Bengal	16 08	1 46
Total	**42 10**	**19 32**
Grand Total	**87 46**	**43 32**

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Kashmir : *Aatish-e-Chinar*

SYEDA SAIYIDAIN HAMEED

This is the title of Sheikh Abdullah's autobiography and a one word description of our visit to Kashmir One does not normally associate the word *aatish* with chinar trees But in the month of September their leaves turn auburn and gold This sight Sheikh Sahib loved beyond anything else in the world—the turning colours of the chinar leaves Nikhil Chakravartty once told me that the last time he met him, a few months before his death, Sheikh Sahib's eyes turned misty when he spoke about what the Valley meant to him Throughout our visit to Kashmir, Mohini and I thought and talked about Sheikh Sahib Mohini talked about him as if he was present among us—and in a way perhaps he was I saw him in the face of the young boys of the orphanage—Markaz-i-Falah-e-Itfal-o-Masturaat—when we visited them at Gupt Ganga near the Shalimar Gardens

In his autobiography, Sheikh Sahib had written about his recitation of the Quran Apparently, his *quirra't* was so exquisite and moving that caravans used to stop and listen to him recite At the Markaz, two of the young boys sang for us a *na'at* in praise of the Prophet who was the saviour of the *miskeen* and *mazloom* The quality of the Kashmiri *quirra't* was reflected in their recitation The little girls, blushing and smiling, sang Allama Iqbal's famous children's poem, *Lab pe aati hai dua ban ke tamanna meri* (My desire rises to my lips as a prayer) We were told that they were on a ration of fifteen rupees a day which precluded any milk or eggs Vitamin deficiency was evident in the colouring of their hair and the white spots on their faces Beautiful little faces were glued at Mohini who asked them to call her Daadi Amma The cold drinks and plateful of almonds they brought out for us were lying untouched while we grappled with the realisation that neither the five-year old Shagufta, nor the three-year old Iqbal had tasted eggs or milk for who knows how long Later at the inauguration of the seminar on Gender Discrimination in the Kashmir Valley, Mohini was to talk about eggs and milk for Shagufta and Iqbal, and all the *itfaal* (children) who were living in ramshackle old houses near the Shalimar, to the Chief Minister and the Chief Secretary who promised relief

Dr Hameed is a member of the National Commission for Women

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I am Kashmiri by birth When I was a child my family lived six months in Jammu, six in Srinagar The umbilical chord with Kashmir has never been entirely severed Driving to the city from the airport (it was a Sunday afternoon) we encountered an air of desolation At every twenty yards there was a gun-toting military man Bunkers piled with sandbags, a lone *sipahi* standing guard were there at each turn Patrol, para-military, post after post everywhere A balmy beautiful Sunday afternoon minus the people Security around the State Guest House area was oppressive The buzzing, teeming area around Shalimar Bagh and Nishat Bagh was deserted We did not have the heart to go inside the gardens Both Mohini and I could not bring ourselves to walking in deserted gardens Later we were told by some officials that the public was all inside At Chashma-e-Shahi we drank deep from the bubbling water fount and looked up longingly at the Pari Mahal, the famous library of Prince Dara Shikoh We were told that it was all security area and in any case it was becoming dark so we should linger no more and return to our guest houses

Ignoring the silent entreaties of the driver of our state vehicle we drove along the Dal not wanting for a single moment to take our eyes off the majesty of the sky and the lake, suffused with the amber-orange colours of the setting sun We were savouring it, storing it in the deepest recesses of our memory like the desert camel stores up water Suddenly the car became an oppressive enclosure Overwhelming was the desire to be among the people—a modest crowd which was ambling along the lakeside near the Kamla Nehru Park We found ourselves on the gentle surface of the Dal being rowed in a Shikara The peace imparted to us at that moment (by an invisible force?) in that strife-torn land cannot be described in words And strife-torn it was, as we were to learn later

(Continued on page 94)

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Climate Change and the Quest for Sustainable Development

M.A. OOMMEN

The problem of climate change has attracted considerable attention in recent times The aim of the conference of nations, or rather parties (COP) which have become signatories to the UN's Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC)—that met in Kyoto, Japan in early December 1997—is to stabilise the greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations to prevent their interference with the climate system However, any effort independent of the issues of sustainable development tantamounts to attacking the symptoms without diagnosing the malady You cannot draw a picture without a canvas The purpose of this paper is to briefly discuss the question of sustainable development or in a broader sense sustainable communities in the context of climate change

The Problem of Climate Change

BY and large scientists and policy-makers all the world over are convinced that climate change alongwith other environmental hazards poses a serious threat to the smooth existence of our planet GHGs like carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide and methane blanket the earth and warm up the atmosphere with disastrous long-term consequences There has been a general upward trend in the average annual global temperature, from about 14.5 degrees Celsius in 1866 when reliable records began, to around 15 4 degree in 1995—the warmest year on record The inter-governmental panel on climate change (IPCC), a network of about 2500 scientists and policy-makers assembled by the UN, projects that by 2100 AD the global average temperature may be in the range of 1 to 3 5 degree Celsius depending on air pollution trends [Bright Chris (1997) p 79] This may not sound too alarming But when we combine it with the fact that the global average surface temperature has risen by 0 3-0 6 degrees Celsius in the past century—the fastest warming since the end of the last ice age more than 10,000 years ago—and the ten hottest years occurred in the eighties and nineties [see Tunali Odil (1996) p 66], one has to be legitimately concerned The global sea level is believed to have risen by about 18 centimetres over the past century and is expected to rise by 95 centimetres in the course of the next century

The burning of fossil fuels is now releasing about six billion tons of carbon into the air each year, adding three billion tons annually to the 170 billion tons that have accumulated since the Industrial Revolution Nature has a built-in ability of processing and purification But the emission of carbon dioxide and other wastes is now far beyond Nature's own processing capabilities It is acknowledged that the atmopheric concentration of carbon dioxide is at the highest level in 150,000 years, and is continuously rising To allow the earth's climate to return to equilibrium over the next few centuries, carbon emissions will have to be reduced to the rate at which the oceans and forests can absorb them—one to two billion tons a year, or as much as 80 per cent below today's rate [See Flavin Christopher (1996) p 29] The ocean and forest cover of the planet has over the years demonstrated a tremendous resilience in acting as the sink to the waste generated by human beings It is now heading to a breaking point through the rapid deforestation and felling of timber in the Amazon, the rich forests of Thailand, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea and so on A great dessertificaiton process is now well underway Scientists estimate that one quarter of the earth's surface will become desert in less than three decades from now Indeed, we are burning both ends of the candle

Table 1 gives figures for eight countries of the carbon emissions from burning of fossile fuels and their rate of growth during 1990-95, which together account for 58 per cent of the total carbon emissions of the world It may be noted from the table that the USA alone contributed to nearly 23 per cent of the world's carbon emissions, although its population is less than five per cent of the world's population The per capita emission of the US is as high as 5 3 tons, and is 18 times higher than that of India and eight times than that of China Although the FCCC made the non-binding pledge to reduce carbon emissions

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to the 1990 levels by 2000 AD, most of the countries increased it, the USA by six per cent (projected to rise to 11 per cent by 2000) and Brazil as high as 38 8 per cent (See Table 1)

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Not only the scientific community but all sensible people have come to realise the dangers of heat trapping carbon emissions and other environmental hazards The incidence of floods (with disastrous consequences for several island nations and coastal populations), droughts (already water shortages plague 80 countries), fires, heat outbreaks, dramatic changes in the insect world and pathogens, threat to a wide variety of animal species and biowealth, increase in the potentially destructive storm winds (which can be as high as 350 kilometres per hour), threat to food security and several other potential dangers of climate change are now fairly well documented Over four hundred physicians and health professionals including Nobel Laureates have in a communique issued in the context of the Kyoto Conference (COP3) warned the world about the ominous threat of epidemics like malaria, yellow fever, etc (For details see *Asahi Evening News*, December 3, 1997, Kyoto) Warmer water temperatures could also lead to widespread damage of aquatic ecosystems and unpredictable additional burden on the world's fisheries. [Bright Chris (1997) p 80] This is quite apart from fishing beyond the capacity of the oceans, that is, an over-exploitation of the oceanic resources Of the world's 15 leading oceanic fisheries, thirteen are in decline [See Brown Lester (1996) p 5] The recent increases in the severity and intensity of El Nino, which too has come to rearrange a good deal of global climate, cannot be dismissed as an aberration of Nature

In short, if you choose to look beyond your immediate world you will find that the planetary ecosystem is under threat The global commons such as air, water, biowealth, etc appropriated and exploited in the name of the principle of competition needs a little more charitable treatment by the homo sapiens Some of them like the atmosphere are physically indivisible (reportedly the smokes of the recent Indonesian fire crossed Sri Lanka) and know no political or geographical boundaries

We venture to hypothesise at this point that through the capitalist mode of production the West has contributed significantly to the misuse and overuse of the planetary resources The so-called 'socialist' experiments have essentially tried only to ape the capitalist model, although one may point out that the priorities and organising principles were different The developing countries also did not have a development perspective very different from that of their erstwhile 'colonisers' One of the most influential journals of our time recently noted "Left and Right, eagerly or reluctantly bow down before global capitalism" [(*The Economist*, (1997) p 5] In what follows, we proceed on the assumption that this homogenising development paradigm is not the answer to sustainable development

Sustainability: Two Questions?

Nobody can claim to have the perfect blueprint for building a sustainable tomorrow What is required at the very minimum is an informed and persistent struggle to change and improve the present situation It is clear that a sizeable number (around 1 5 billion) of the world's population live below an income of one dollar per day, and the lives of an equally large number are nothing to be envied about Certainly, the volume of carbons produced in the pursuit of economic development since the Industrial Revolution does not seem to have made the world more liveable, equitable and sustainable Hence the question of sustainability assumes great significance I do not propose to make a formal definition of sustainability Ultimately it is the sustainability of communities, not economies that matter However, an attempt is made to clarify the concept by asking two inter-related questions, namely, sustainability of what and sustainability for whom?

The aim of the FCCC is to stabilise greenhouse gas concentration in the atmosphere in a way that protects ecosystems and allows sustainable economic growth It is clear that what is sought to be sustained is global capitalism within the biosphere Indeed, it will take a highly time-consuming bargaining exercise to arrive at some binding targets Considering the tremendous economic costs involved and the economic power and political clout of big business, the big polluters may not end up as losers

The USA has come out with several market-related suggestions such as trading emissions, and joint implementation with credits They involve buying and selling of emission reduction targets between achievers and non-achievers For example, it would be more expensive for a US-based plant to take steps to reduce its gas emissions by say two per cent than to contribute to an Indian plant to enable its gas emissions to be reduced by six per cent This proposal may even be tied to foreign aid Eventually financial instruments are likely to be created for buying and selling emission quotas once this proposal is accepted The lure of foreign money will be adequate inducement for several countries already burdened by external debt Once these are accepted in principle, is one of the Framework Convention's pollution credit banks can come up! At any rate, lending institutions like the World Bank and IMF and trading organisations like the World Trade Organisation alongwith such arrangements could well take care of global capitalism

It is our contention that efforts and policy suggestions so far are unmistably directed towards only attacking the symptoms, steering clear of the causes underlying unsustainability

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An important cause of unsustainability is the organising principle of global capitalism, based as it is on profit and export-led growth This growth is meant for the rich of the world or those with exchange entitlements to participate in the market It is not an inclusive system The production structure is designed (or redesigned) to cater to the level and pattern of consumption of the rich The last four Human Development Reports of the UNDP contain ample evidence of the lifestyles of the North being unmistakably distinct To quote a Dutch economist

> The North consumes about three-quarters of the world's resources, but is home to only a quarter of its population An average person in the industrialised world uses eighty times as much energy an inhabitant of Sub-Saharan Africa The population of the United States has used more energy in the past fifty years than humanity has burned up in its entire history If every one were to consume as many resources as the average American citizen, the world's annual production would have to be 130 times higher than it was in 1979' [Court (1992) p 111]

The poignancy of this overuse and misuse is heightened further by the fact that a sizeable proportion of this opulent high lifestyle is made possible through a regular reverse flow of resources from the countries in the South,[1] through lower prices of their products, persistent devaluation of their currencies, debt-servicing and so on Even if we assume that the earth's resources are large enough it is clear that long before the required 'growth' (higher the rate of growth of the GNP, the happier and more efficient you are) for the South is achieved, a large part of the world would have been submerged in water (one need not then worry about 30 small nations any more!) and the rest polluted into near extinction To quote Thys dela Court again

> Development, defined as material growth, has become the doctrine of colonialism, As the problems associated with this doctrine become more urgent—the difference between rich and poor is skyrocketing, violence is on the rise and the environment faces destruction—the doctrine itself is being questioned. [Court (1992) p, 109],

Under such a situation, the twin questions, sustainability of what and for whom assume significance

The present emerges from the past It will be a great travesty of the truth of we ignore the fact that the present-day international division of labour, evolved through centuries of conquest and colonisation, is unjust and unequal Although the Brundtland Report remarked that "inequality is the planet's main 'environmental' problem, it is also its main 'development' problem" [The World Commission on Environment and Development, (WCED) (1987) p 6], it did not go into the issues involved As Philip Smith and Samuel Okoye (1994), while introducing a Report to the Pugwash Council, observed

> The colonial powers employed their capital to take the rights and resources from the colonies (aided and abetted by the elites of the poor countries themselves) It is, therefore, inevitable that the poor stay poor and, because they are poor, they are less able to organise with others in a similar predicament to improve their lot No matter what the poor do, the dice of development are loaded against them [Okoye and Smith (1994), in Smith B Philip *et al* (1994) (ed) p 9]

The World Bank's conceptualisation of poverty as an individual tragedy thus becomes a caricature of the truth [See World Bank (1990), Oommen (1997)]

It is easy to put all the blame of sustainability on population growth Indeed population growth has done great harm to the environment and contributed to an increase in poverty But it should not be stretched too far so as to escape from remedying the innumerable institutional factors that perpetuate poverty This is what most international conferences on population sponsored by the UN and other agencies harp upon

Undoubtedly, the Rio Conference (Earth Summit) was the first ever global initiative to tackle the problem of environmental and ecosystem damages and sustainable development But eloquent on principles it was careful in preserving the status quo It was clearly designed for the North As John Kirkby *et al* observe

> The unholy alliance between Northern money, Northern self-interest and soft green concerns with the conservation of "pure" ecosystems has ensured that Rio 1992 is predominantly about the unimpaired growth of the North, implying accelerated extraction of resources from the South (driven by IMF adjustment programmes) and it is about maintenance of the global commons, at present being degraded largely by the North [Kirkby, J *et al* (1994) pp 10-11]

Working towards an Approach to Sustainable Development

IN this section we try to outline certain aspects that need to be stressed in working towards sustainable development, a livable and equitable world The Brundtland Report (1987) defines sustainable development as

> development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs [WCED (1987) p 43)]

The accent of this definition is on intra-generation equity It is not unhappy in carrying forward the iniquities of the present generation It largely depends on the time preference pattern of consumption of the decision-makers of the present generation Intra-generation equity is equally important So long as your priority is to maximise present consumption, you may discount the future Intra-generation equity involves striving towards (a) territorial equity, that is, equity as between nations and space within nations in the provision of basic necessities and amenities of life, and (b) an egalitarian society where the dynamics of development should not promote inequalities Inequalities that are not to the benefit of all are injustice [See Rawls, J (1973) Chapter II]

Human beings have to live in symbiotic relationship with nature, of which it is an integral part The presentday tragedy is that the dominant development paradigm of market-mediated growth treats the life support system as a sources of raw materials[2] to be exploited the profit or greed It is an anthropocentric approach The overemphasis on economic growth is derived from this paradigm Economic growth measured by the sumtotal of value added can grow irrespective of the cost and damage to environment Although recently there is a recognition to count the contribution of women which fall outside market mediation, it has not become fashionable to record it in growth Strangely economic growth which is but an instrumental variable becomes an objective *per se* In a way idealising competition and wealth accumulation as the most desirable and efficient pursuit may have to be seen also as indications of a profound spiritual emptiness Mainstream economic theory which is based on a lot of abstract and questionable assumptions has played a significant role in legitimising this The basic postulate of economics that wants are unlimited (and means scarce) opens the floodgates for rationalising over-consumption and exploitation Although economics and ecology share the same Greek root *oikos*, meaning house or habitat, the twain have refused to meet As Arthur Dahl puts it,

> The chasm between economics and ecology is a symptom of the malfunctioning of modern society which threatens our very future [Dahl, A L (1996) p 1]

Removal of this hiatus is basic to scientific enquiry This sort of disciplinary disjuncture has done much harm in understanding reality in an integrated and holistic manner A science that fails to distinguish between the phenomenal form and its essence can only be a pseudo-science [See Oommen (1992)]

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THE need to build counter cultures that fight the growth-induced lifestyles as the end of human endeavour is felt more than ever before Efforts to rediscover Gandhiji could not be considered as an invitation to primitivism, but only as emphasising a new set of values in managing the community's resources A Report to the Pugwash Council, in which 15 scholars participated and which does not mention Gandhiji even once, recommends

> In order to arrest irreversible destruction of biodiversity, and incidentally to slow down global warming and the exhaustion of fossile fuel stocks, the total per capita energy consumption must finally be reduced to around 1 5 KW (continuous) per capita—a factor of four below the present level in Europe and a factor of more than six below the present level in the US and Canada [Smith and Okoye (1994) in Smith B Philip *et al* (1994) p 188]

The overemphasis on growth has nurtured a technological paradigm that keeps human beings redundant and continues polluting the atmosphere in the process of growth How can any technology be considered modern and advanced so long as it keeps people obsolete? The automobile-based modern era is hardly half a century old But it has considerably vitiated human culture and atmosphere Imagine what happens if everybody in India owns a car! Almost everybody is made to believe that this is the last in human evolution! Alternatives like superfast trains, bicycles, could alter the lifestyles of people, besides saving tremendous energy The need for energy systems that are based on sunlight, winds, waves, besides being pollution-free reduce the cost of petroleum import bills for several developing countries

The throwaway culture of capitalism perpetuated to promote continuous demand (something that can be done through redistribution in favour of the poor, but deliberately avoided) is a waste and an insult to Nature which survives through a process of recycling Recycling is a way to reducing land, air and water pollution For example, steel produced from scrap reduces air pollution by 85 per cent, cuts water pollution by 76 per cent and eliminates mining waste altogether Making paper from recycled material reduces pollutants entering the air by 74 per cent and water by 35 per cent as well as pressures on forests in direct proportion to the amount recycled [See Brown Lester *et al* (1992) p 65]

No meaningful quest for a sustainable development is possible within the framework of most of the international organisations for a variety of reasons We do not propose to go into this question except to assert that the World Bank, IMF and WTO, objectively speaking, face a legitimacy crisis The UN, established during the colonial days, is extremely undermocratic and lacks a global mandate (based on a global constituent assembly) Issues like global accumulation without responsibility and accountability to the global society (this is what the TNCs, FIIs, etc do) drug trafficking and money laundering, global arms trade (the most lucrative business of the century), rampant sex tourism including child prostitution, global gambling and speculation (as against a world GNP of less than $ 25 trillion, the total volume of finance capital trade is over $ 600 trillion), growing inequality in wealth and poverty in the midst of plenty and a host of other relevant issues are evading the global agenda The colossal expansion and global diffusion of the production and purchase of weapons, armaments and sophisticated 'hearing', 'seeing' and 'sensing' information gathering equipments during the post-Cold War regime continues with the merciful blessings of the United Nations Organisation 'Military Industrial Complex'—the intimate fusion of arms companies, military commanders and politicians of the USA—still continues strongly [See Mandel, E (1975), Oommen (1993)] Without striving for durable peace, there can be no sustainable development Fixing a few GHG emission targets does not achieve anything unless we care to go beyond the phenomenal form

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THE stabilisation and structural adjustment programme, which all the developing countries have been compelled to follow by the World Bank and IMF as part of their loan conditionalities, is but undisguised affirmation of global capitalism The World Trade Organisation presides over the rules of the game for global capitalism to flourish in the name of free trade and global competition Growth is the goal, be it that of military hardware or over-exploitation of forest, ocean or any of the other natural resources Not only that, no institution in the world has contributed more to ecological destruction over the years than the World Bank which has systematically financed mega projects including fossil fuels in India, Brazil, Indonesia and other developing countries Christopher Flavin after a comprehensive review of the energy funding of the World Bank criticises it for not supporting fully of the plethora of decentralised renewable energy technologies and notes

> Overall, end use energy efficiency still represents less than 5 per cent of the Bank's total energy lending [Flavin C (1997) p 29]

A recent book by Catherine Caufield on *World Bank and the Poverty of Nations* devotes the first chapter to explain the damage done by the World Bank to Indian people and their environment To quote the author

> A conservative estimate of the number of Indians forced from their homes by large dams since independence is 11 million, another 4 million having been displaced by mines, industrial developments and wild life sanctuaries Some authorities put the figure at 20 million or more [Caufield (1996) p 11]

Through decimating forests, tribal lands, biodiversity the harm the Bank has done to environment is beyond estimation The estimation is rendered more difficult because the debt-servicing also has to be done through more and more exports which necessarily lead to further damage to natural resources Creating sustainable development and deepening debt crisis can never go together Progressive reduction of the debt of the developing countries is an essential precondition to the creation of a sustainable world Can this happen under a regime of structural adjustment?

To conclude, creating counter cultures the could fight the dominant paradigm of market-led growth is the key to sustainable development Attacking symptoms without treating the disease, can only perpetuate the malady ■

[Paper presented at the Inter-Religious Consultation on "Climate Change A Challenge to Sustainable Development in Asia" (Kyoto, November 30-December 5, 1997)]

TABLE 1

Carbon Emissions from Burning of Fossil Fuels, in Eight Select Countries, 1995

Country	*Total Emissions (million tons)*	*Share of World Carbon Emissions (per cent)*	*Emissions Per Capita (tons)*	*Emissions Growth 1990-95 (per cent)*
United States	1394	22 9	5 3	6 2
Russia	437	7 2	2 9	-27 7
Japan	302	5 0	2 4	8 7
Germany	234	3 8	2 9	-10 2
China	807	13 3	0 7	27 5
India	229	3 8	0 3	27 7
Indonesia	56	0 9	0 3	38 8
Brazil	62	1 0	0 4	19 8
Total (8)	**3521**	57 9	0 9	—

FOOTNOTES

1 The terms North and South are vague, but are used only as a shorthand vocabulary for industrialised and developing countries

2 It is unfortunate that the World Watch Institute (Washington) which does yeomen service in the interests of sustainable environment also entertains such an approach

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SYEDA SAIYIDAIN HAMEED *Aatish-e-Chinar*

(Continued from page 87)

At a meeting with law students held at the University of Kashmir we witnessed the anguish of the women The students recounted incidents of atrocities perpetrated on women What did they care whether the *zulm* was by security forces or by terrorists? Targeted by both, they lived their days in fear Slowly the incidents were related by the women students Familiar stories to which time has made us immune Faces planted their seals on our minds A woman wearing *hijab* who challenged us to find ways of stopping the double-edged targeting of women, the girl whose tears never stopped because of her sister's dowry murder. Later at the Zenana Dastkar Markaz at Khanyar, we spoke to Zainab, with the largest, darkest eyes in the world, whose husband was killed in a cross-fire and who was left with no means of support for her two small children Girls with roses in their cheeks were sitting down to embroider the *namdahs*, inhaling the fluff which would give them respiratory diseases before they reached their prime As we drank the best *kahwa*, surrounded with exquisite pieces of their craft, the women poured their troubles in a language which did not need to be translated

Near the university was the Hazratbal Mosque The same feeling of desolation greeted us there I recalled my last visit when we were guests of the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Mushirul Haq who was shot to death by militants a few months later, the place was the centre of milling crowds A host of pigeons and a company of Army jawans was all there was left of the *mela* that surrounded the Mosque I wanted to turn back but Mohini and other friends wanted to go inside With their heads deferentially covered they walked in while I trailed behind Someone pointed towards an enclosure We had to be bodily searched The woman said she was only doing her duty but that entailed the most crude handling of the human body as if something was hidden under our flesh Smarting and outraged at the physical intrusion, we reached the inner courtyard Military men were lolling around, chatting, sleeping, sunning But at the sight of four women with saris drawn over their heads they said *Mustooraat ko ijaazat nahin* (Women are not allowed) 'Why?'—I asked 'Who has made this rule? Kashmir is known for its *masaawaat* (equality), Islam upholds *masaawaat* ' I looked at my friends Their silence indicated that this was not the time to argue

Kashmir does not fall within the purview of the National Commission for Women Act 1990 But it falls within our sensibilities as women Nazifa, Hameeda, Zainab, Muslim Jan, Um-i-Kulsum were all our sisters They looked at us with deeply troubled eyes We had a human bond which goes beyond anything that states can legislate ■

"Ancient Wrongs" and the National Human Rights Commission

R.M. PAL

During the last four years since the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) came into being, it has focussed, to a fair extent, on violation of human rights by the organs of the state, the police, the para-military forces and others It has a more exacting task ahead (It is particularly important to take note on the fiftieth year of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*—the celebrations of which started on December 10, 1997—Article I of that document which states that all are born equal) That is the task of redressing societal wrongs which are more deep-seated The Dalits (SC/STs), together with other deprived sections like women, children, and the minorities, must be enabled to reap the rewards of independence which was ushered in fifty years ago They must be provided all help in their bid to eliminate every type of discrimination This is possible only in a non-caste, non-hierarchical society

Basically, the Dalits' struggle is a struggle for human rights, human dignity. If they succeed in their struggle, as they must, it will prove a blessing for the entire nation—not merely any group or community The dominating section of our people must, therefore, adopt a strong position against caste hierarchy, communalism, anti-minoritism, gender prejudice which are the major sources of societal human rights violations, or "ancient wrongs" as the NHRC put it

With growing awakening among the Dalits who constitute a sizable section of our population and the Dalits' persisting alienation from the mainstream, if caste identity remains intact, the very concept of integration, assimilation, patriotism—in short pride in being an Indian, pride in being involved in nation-building—will be undercut Making the dominating section respond to the national need is a veritable challenge because this section continues to assume innate superiority that its members being clever, intelligent, educated, cultured, and refined deserve what they have They want the others to take shelter under their dominance and seek sustenance at their mercy In such a social atmosphere, developing the culture and values of human rights which the NHRC is committed to promote will remain a distant goal

The dominating section must rise to the occasion and declare that India does not accept the commonly held belief that caste hierarchy and the social system based on it have been beneficial or benevolent They must demolish the structure of hierarchy so that there is no discrimination on this score This step alone will help create a culture of human rights

It is the task of the NHRC, in our understanding, to act, in cooperation with enlightened social activists and NGOs, as the philosopher-guide in helping the people to help themselves with a view to creating a new man, a new woman and a new society where the values of human rights and freedoms and human dignity are universally respected

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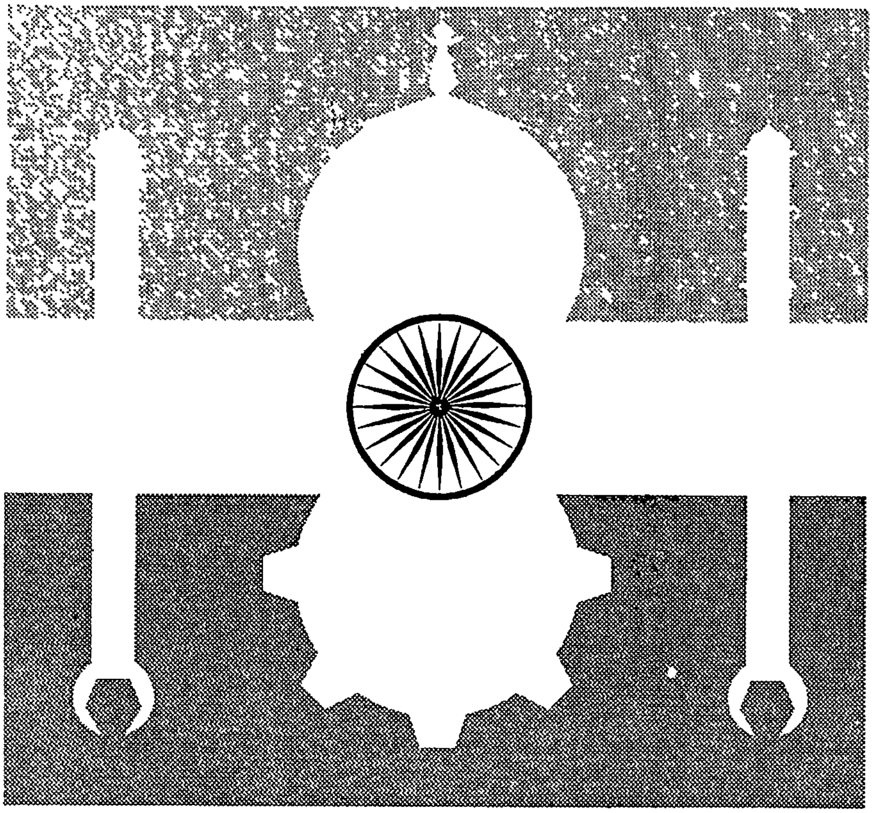
THESE values and the respect for other fellow beings cannot be legislated But the NHRC has the mandate to put the issue in the proper perspective both before the government and the society As people living in this geographical territory, that is, India, it is in our interest to live together But we cannot live together if we continue to think and act in terms of caste hierarchy The NHRC can, if it can summon up the will, contribute considerably towards breaking the walls that have stood rock-like for centuries We know it is a difficult and dauting task—the more so because these walls were not created by accident but by some of the most sophisticated scholars and "wise men" It is precisely because of this that pioneers like Buddha, Rammohun Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Mahatma Phule found it hard to have a dialogue with such "scholars" and law-givers With the result that the culture and values of human rights and civil liberties which these great and good men espoused have not yet taken roots in our country Our soil is not yet ready to receive the seeds of these values It is one of the tasks of the NHRC to prepare the soil

The "ancient wrongs" have not disappeared How

(Continued on page 112)

The author, a former Principal of Rajdhani College, University of Delhi, is the editor of PUCL Bulletin

WHAT TAJ IS TO INDIA'S CULTURAL HERITAGE



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Meaning of 'Instability'

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

The general elections have already come and the political parties have been getting ready how they will enter the mass campaign in the next two months or so Here is an election that has been forced upon us because the parties that returned to the Lok Sabha could not elect a leader from among themselves who could command the majority in the Lower House of Parliament, and as such its leader, I K Gujral, had to tell the President that he had ceased to command the majority that he had enjoyed in the House In other words, as soon as the Congress decided to stay away then the party in power, that is, the United Front—had to go to the President to tell him that it had ceased to be the majority in the Lok Sabha

As far as the United Front was concerned, it did not agree to ditch the DMK, while the Congress, on whose support base it could survive, was determined to get the DMK out of the Central Government on the plea that Karunanidhi and his DMK were arraigned in the Jain Report having favoured the LTTE which was made responsible for Rajiv Gandhi's extermination Although Justice Jain could hardly substantiate that the Tamil people or the DMK were instrumental in bringing about Rajiv Gandhi's ghastly end, the fact that Karunanidhi and his party were made the target of attack for the liquidation of Rajiv Gandhi, there was no other means by which the Congress could show its face or avert a split inside the party's leadership Particularly the result was obviously the very same, that is, the Congress had fallen out with the United Front and as a result the Gujral Government could not hold on as it was promptly divested of the Lok Sabha majority which alone could keep the party together

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SUCH a sordid picture of squabbles in public display could hardly be seen in the momentous general elections of 1946 that had brought the Congress to power in the Central Assembly which was later turned into the Constituent Assembly and over which Dr Rajendra Prasad presided This Assembly drew up the memorable Constitution of India which has become the charter of Indian democracy and which, despite amendments, could survive for five decades The present writer was one of those who was witness to the 1946 elections, which incidentally were not fought by universal suffrage (which came with the new Constitution) but had been drawn up by the British Raj as per the Government of India Act of 1935 which had been passed by the British Parliament

It is well to remember the difference in the situation in 1946 and the present day and to note that despite differences, what really stirred the people of India It was known at the time that the British would soon hand over power If this had stirred the Congress, it shook the Muslim League as well, because it understood that the Muslim population, particularly in northern India, was ready to follow Jinnah and the partition which led to the birth of Pakistan The weeks that followed were a real nightmare for the Indian people, but overshadowing everything was the realisation that freedom could not be far away Although there was communal tension allround, nobody had predicted that there would be such hideous killings by Hindus and Muslims, particularly in the Punjab and the neighbourhood

The leaders began their campaigning in the old style—moving from village to village, in their bare feet, without having the advantage of luxurious automobiles Gandhiji did not campaign but wherever he went he moved in his well-known Third Class There were no aircraft by which the leaders could fly from one point to another Although they got the support of the affluent, they did not go in for any of the luxuries that the rich could bring The badge of political activism was *swadeshi*, and naturally everybody put on the khadi dhoti and kurta, and this was true of Panditji as well as the other famous leaders of the Congress in those days

There was no Sonia Gandhi in those days, though there were quite a few non-Indians among them, who had taken to the life of the Indian freedom fighter Nellie Sengupta and Mira Behn, among others Incidentally, Nellie Sengupta spent the last years of her life in East Pakistan, which had then been partitioned from India Mira Behn lived long after Gandhiji, but she was away from the dazzling limelight of the glitterati to which some had been accustomed

The cynical joke at that time was that the Congressman would call for the *meeting-ka-poshak* that is, the uniform for the meeting Out of the plush comforts of the rich, there arrived the Congress leader who dared not go to the meeting except when he had put on the rough khadi—not the smooth *polyvastra* of today The technological growth had hardly taken place under the Raj So, for the premier political party that contested for power fifty years ago, it was only the microphone and nothing more If Nehru could rouse the crowd, it was not because he was better off with the instrument, but his voice, the strident voice of freedom, could ring out loud and clear

Panditji was not popular in the Bengal of those days That was because only six years before that, he was with the Congress High Command which had thrown out Subhas Chandra Bose from the Congress and thereby began the rift that the Congress High Command could hardly find its feet within the Congress, which at the district level was by and large the mouthpiece of militant nationalism Subhas escaped to Germany and then to Japan where he picked up his Azad Hind Fauj The Congress leaders, embittered by the British mendacity, had no escape but to join the 'Do-or-Die' movement that engulfed the Congress in 1942 This was a great leveller, and it saw how Subhas had a deep impact on the mind of the Congress

The result could be seen in 1945 when every campaign for the release of the Azad Hind prisoners was the signal for a massive Congress gathering, and whatever the leaders might have thought, the Congress ranks were swept into huge mass actions for the release of the Azad Hind Fauj and later on for the INA prisoners Actually, this set off the conflagration which made the British Raj quit India Within that titanic wave came the general elections of 1946 There was no need for a slogan for the general elections This was amply provided by the overcast cloud of the time—the time for the foreign ruler to quit these shores

Then the issue was decided by the event and not that the event was contrived by men in power—the demand for a change in the power-structure was all over the firmament It was not a mechanical putting the ballots into the box, the electorate was all agog for the change of guards instead of the White man, it is the native who would come to rule The mechanism of that transfer of power was yet to be decided And that decision was taken by the dissonance within those who were destined to inherit power in this far-flung land The issue of the elections was, therefore, foreclosed by the transfer of power

Compared to the tumultuous elections at that time, the present seems to be placid There is talk about the uncertainty of the times, that the government here is without any stability etcetera etcetera Compared to the situation that prevailed when the transfer of power took place, there is on the one hand plenty of stability in the present situation One knows that whatever happens, this country would not fall a prey to any foreign power—any marauder across the border Whatever happens, there is no question today of any occupation of any tract of Indian soil by any hostile power Where then is the instability in the country? The British Empire which was the mightiest at the beginning of the War was shaken to its very foundations, and there was no question of its continuance in any form after it was forced to declare that it would quit Secondly, the Indian people were restless that the White supremacy still continued They wanted their own leaders to govern the country—a unique development unprecedented in history Such a formidable empire as the British had built up, was shaken to its very foundation Putting the leaders in prison did not help as it made them the accredited heroes for all times to come The time had come for the British to quit India—a remarkable feature of the Indian revolutionary situation The empire over which the sun never set, found itself reconciled to the might of the people and the foreign power did not had to rule Could there have been greater instability than this? Not the outsider knocking at the gate but the people inside were unreconciled to the continuation of the foreign rule Its days were numbered There could be no greater instability than this

Historically, the fall of the British Raj ended the glory of the British power Not long afterwards, the well-known "East of Suez" was declared—an ignominy of the Raj which one after the other it had to give up power, and Tony Blair, the British Premier now, is ready to refer for a settlement of the vexed question by which the British tenaciously held on to a portion of Northern Island when it was found that the Irish independence could not possibly be delayed any longer

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COMPARE this with the situation in India today We have a structure of governance we have a civil society and the rule of law The bureaucracy is intact and so are the armed forces, what more is wanted of stability in a country?

In modern times, when we talk of instability, one has to take into account the inner stability of the system Whatever might have been its origin, the inner stability of a system lies in the promises made to the people And here we fight shy of facing the reality It is not the parliamentary system or the bureaucracy that is the sign of the durability of a system More important is the promise of a better life

(Continued on page 114)

LETTER FROM MOSCOW

Point of No Return?

MASOOD ALI KHAN

In this eightieth anniversary year of the Great Russian Socialist Revolution President Yeltsin, his administration, the government and the new ruling financial oligarchy have been assuring the world that in Russia capitalism has come to stay for good, and has now sufficiently consolidated itself, and that no threat of a real communist comeback exists "A return to the old ways is already impossible A free economy has been firmly established in Russia, and even our opponents do not question the need for reform," Yeltsin said recently What is now required is a durable economic growth and for this state regulation and "a new economic order" are essential

But obviously before advancing to a "new" economic order one has to take a look at the order that has been already established in the last six years of Yeltsin rule The multi-billionaire American financier and international investor, George Soros, in an interview to *Izvestia* (October 8, 1997) said this about the state of affairs here

> I call it 'robber capitalism' because the easiest way to accumulate capital was to rob the assets of the crumbling state After the elections of 1996 the system of 'robber capitalism' has been firmly established and a new oligarchy has emerged

Other Western observers have used the term 'bandit capitalism' *Time* magazine (October 20, 1997) declared that the impression widespread in the West has deepened

> that Yeltsin's Russia is in danger of becoming what US researchers recently called a 'criminal-syndicalist state' controlled by an alliance of corrupt politicians, businessmen and crime bosses

The recent events show that these oligarchs are now feverishly fighting among themselves for a division of state wealth and resources yet to be grabbed through new privatisation auctions

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THESE new monopolists, financiers and industrialists of the new era, who can be counted on fingertips, rule the country in alliance with the former-communist big state bureaucracy and directors of enterprises They can freely manipulate the government and the information media which they now firmly control On top are eight or ten rich oligarchs who now control as much as half of the country's gross domestic product In a country where just six-seven years ago all economy, all enterprises and resources belonged to the state, such a quick emergence of multi-billionaires, owners of colossal fortunes obviously could not have been the fruit of honest labour The fabulously rich new oligarchs and bankers have appeared due to rampant corruption in high places and their close links with the 'democratic' leaders

The big ones who now openly claim that they really rule the country are

1 Unexim Bank (leader Vladimir Potanin) besides huge finances, controls media, telecom, Norilsky Nickel, oil company Sidanko, wants to grab other oil resources, recently acquired 25 per cent share in the huge state communications monopoly, Svyazinvest, and in this grab a big part was played by George Soros, the American billionaire, who advanced about one billion dollars and consolidated his alliance with Potanin
2 Boris Berezovsky and his group have substantial interests in banking, oil (Sibirneft), airline Aeroflot, luxury car sales, biggest TV network, *ORT* He is a member and Deputy Secretary of the President's Security Council
3 V Gusinsky, Mostbank group TV, other media
4 Alfa group (leaders P Aven, M Fridman) Tyumen oil company
5 Stolychny Bank, merged with Agro Bank now forming SBS-Agro (leader A Smolensky)
6 Inkombank (leader V Vinogradov)
7 Menatep bank, oil company Yukos controls Rosprom (leader M Khodorkovsky)
8 National Reserve Bank (leader A Lebedyev)

These top financiers and industrialists made possible Yeltsin's victory in the last Presidential elections, the oligarchs united their resources against the communist threat to their power (estimates of funds provided for the campaign vary from 100 to 30 million dollars) This generous help and the media control of the tycoons proved decisive for Yeltsin's success

This year in mid-September Yeltsin met the big oligarchs The meeting was called a most important event, and for the purpose of economic strategic planning it was decided to set up a joint 'command' How it will actually operate remained a mystery

The author is a veteran Indian journalist based in Moscow since the fifties

How rich and influential these top seven or eight elite of new big finance are can be seen by the following

Boris Berezovsky was recently included as 97th in Forbes' listing of the world's 200 richest people and his personal wealth was estimated at three billion dollars (*Time* magazine, October 20, 1997)

Vladimir Potanin, who was earlier a Communist youth leader, is worth 700 million dollars

Vladimir Gusinsky (Mostbank group), his bank is a major player in Russian finance He was earlier a theatre director, became a media tycoon, his fortune estimated at 400 million dollars

Now see how they control the information media

Unexim Bank controls and owns most shares of the leading papers *Izvestia* and *Komsomolskaya Pravda* and some others

Mostbank group have the leading daily *Segodnya*, news magazine *Itogi* (published together with *Newsweek*), a number of other journals, also the leading TV company *NTV*, radio station *Echo Moskvy*

Berezovksy's Logo-Vaz has the influential paper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, the popular illustrated weekly *Ogonyok*, also controls the biggest TV first channel *ORT* and TV channel *6*

SBS-Agro have six publications, one daily *Komersant*, a news agency and share in *ORT*

The gas monopoly GAZPROM has the daily *Trud* and three other papers and the journal *Profile*

Moscow city administration (Mayor Luzhkov, a possible Presidential hopeful) has decisive control of three Moscow dailies, some journals and above all the TV company *CENTRE*, 3rd channel

This media control means thought control and gives power of censorship in the hands of a small group Few now believe that the information media are free and honest

◆

ANATOLY CHUBAIS, the Minister of Finance and First Deputy Premier, is favouring Potanin and his Unexim Bank Potanin himself headed the State Property Committee earlier which organised the privatisation of state owned industry This Committee (now made Ministry) before him was headed by Chubais, who organised the first wave of give-away 'voucher' privatisations

Potanin's successor to head the State Property Committee was Alfred Kokh, also a Chubais man He had to leave his post because, as Yeltsin said, Kokh had favoured too much one group of businessmen (Unexim)when 25 per cent share of the state telecom monopoly, Svyazinvest, were sold off

This led to a fierce conflict between Chubais and Potanin on one side and Berezovsky and Gusinsky on the other The media controlled by the two sides had a free-for-all propaganda war The last two exerted considerable pressure and Kokh lost his post, only to go from state service to private sector, to a lucrative job as head of the firm Montes Auri, in Potanin's Unexim empire which he had loyally served

Soon about him another scandal broke that a publishers firm had given as a bribe an 'advance' of 100,000 dollars to Kokh on a book on privatisation in Russia, a book yet to be written As it turns out, the publishers company in Switzerland also belongs to the same, Unexim Bank, that is, Potanin

Earlier the Chubais-Potanin alliance brought about a coup in the leading daily *Izvestia* Unexim having acquired a control packet of shares of the publication squeezed out its popular editor, Golembiovsky (alongwith him some 40 journalists also walked out to start their own paper *New Izvestia* which came out on November 1) Who do you think provided the funds for the journalists who refused to surrender to Unexim, Potanin and Chubais? Of course, the leader of the rival empire, big boss Boris Berezovsky

One reason why Golembiovsky had to quit *Izvestia* was that he could not be controlled by Potanin The paper had also published a series of articles criticising Chubais One sensational detailed piece described how Anatoly Chubais was given an interest-free loan to the tune of 14 billion 454 million roubles on February 29, 1996, to be returned in the year 2001 The bank in question was Stolychny (head Alexander Smolensky) The purpose of the loan was stated as "development of civil society"! The money was given to a Unexim bank subsidiary firm, the above mentioned Montes Auri, for speculation on the securities and bonds market, where prices could be considerably manipulated by spreading rumours, as the interested party had access to vital secret information regarding the coming financial measures Big profits were thus earned by speculation on the market on the interest-free loan Why a loan on such generous terms was given and why the sum was used to make more money for Chubais, and why he is a loyal supporter of the involved bankers need not be elaborated Chubais said that he had not done anything illegal Later Chubais helped the Stolychni Bank to acquire the Agro Bank with its 1200 branches and million seven thousand depositors (Thus the present SBS-Agro bank was born)

Izvestia managed to publish a detailed account of all this in a scathing article (July 1, 1997), when the chief editor was about to be removed The *New Izvestia* has come out with the help of the rival tycoon, but how much freedom Berezovsky will allow is yet to be seen

Chubais is helping the Unexim financial giant to become an economic state within a state in the power game that is being played The present fight between the Chubais-Potanin combine and the rival bankers, Berezovsky, Gusinsky and others, is for very big stakes—who is to finally control the country's economy? The battle is being fought with the year 2000 in view when the next Presidential election is due

◆

BANDIT capitalism has its own rules of business and financial competition Rivalries in the market are settled by ruthless methods The English word 'killer' is now popularly used in the Russian language for contract killers Assassinations of rivals are a common occurrence and are carried out by these professionals The new rich go about in armoured cars accompanied by armed guards and live under a constant threat Hundreds of such contract killings have taken place Journalists who show too much curiosity and try to discover the murky secrets of the business mafia are also murdered Nearly all such crimes remain unsolved An atmosphere of tension and fear rule the fabulous paradise of the new big bourgeoisie When Gusinsky plays tennis here fifteen armed guards are employed to patrol the courts The new rich prefer to spend a lot of time abroad

It was reported that in the last four years 161 bankers have been thus killed, not to speak of countless smaller businessmen and traders

In 1994 Berezovsky himself narrowly escaped a major assassination attempt His Mercedes car was blown up by remote control Berzovsky escaped but others were killed The big boss was scared, left the country, and got Israeli citizenship He says he knows who was behind the attack But nobody was arrested or punished for the crime, it remains a mystery Berezovsky came back later, was made the Secretary of the National Security Council which plays a vital role in defence and security planning He also played an important part in dealings with the Chechen leaders His rivals created a big fuss in their media over his Israeli citizenship when he was appointed to such a sensitive high post For sometime Berezovsky tried to keep his 'dual' citizenship. His TV channel and newspapers counter attacked claiming that the campaign was a manifestation of anti-Semitism But ultimately Berezovsky had to publicly give up his Israeli citizenship and chose to remain at his high influential post

Suddenly it was announced on November 5 that the President had sacked Berezovsky from his post of Deputy Secretary of the Security Council This was seen as a big victory for Chubais, Nemtsov and the Unexim's Potanin They have managed to squeeze him out of the state structure Some moves are afoot to reduce Berezovsky's hold on the TV first channel, *ORT*, which is formally a state controlled institution, as a majority of the shares belong to the state Now a body of state supervisors has been formed to control *ORT* It includes Yeltsin's daughter Tatyana Diachneko, director of *Itar-Tass*, V Ignatenko and others

When the battle of the big financiers was at its height the *ORT* was used fully by Berezovsky to attack the Chubais-Potanin camp They could not forget that

Berezovsky's ouster from the Security Council was welcomed by the Communists, Zyuganov and Duma Speaker Seleznyov as a "present on the revolution anniversary" This showed that they were not averse to moving closer to the Chubais-Potanin group in this line-up, although publicly Zyuganov continued to attack Chubais

Berezovsky, of course, keeps his wealth and empire, and alongwith allies in the financial world, remains a formidable player, though now out of government structures

◆

THE transition to bandit capitalism Russian style has been most rapid There were, roughly speaking, three stages

The first stage was trade Today's business giants began as small exporters and importers The former Communist youth leaders in Menatep sold computers Potanin had once worked in the Soviet Foreign Trade Ministry, he built his fortune on imports as all controls were removed and he had his foreign contacts and knowledge of trade from his Ministry experience Thus emerged Unexim today as one of the biggest financial institutions of the country

In the earlier phase of economic reforms the prices on the foreign and internal markets differed enormously, actually a few times over, there also existed various exchange rates so for those who knew how to operate in those wonderful conditions, and had the required contacts, profits ran up to a few thousand per cent at each turnover These Komsomol leaders also used to the full the various tax-free import facilities that were granted to some organisations, like sports, youth and others

The second stage was that of banking In 1993-94 the private trade business with newly accumulated capital entered the new finance market Many banks were launched, and the government under Yegor Gaidar created the best possible conditions for the young banking system. The state structures deposited huge funds in accounts at these banks, took credits from them at very high interest rates. The banks bought state short-term bonds, using for this state funds and made huge profits.

Now we are in the third stage of Russian private business development which can be called industrial. The money accumulated in the previous stages is being directed towards buying up big state industrial enterprises. There is a scramble to grab. The most powerful oligarchs are split and warring among themselves while Yeltsin appealed to the rivals to cool down and cooperate with his young reformers, the First Vice-Premiers Chubais and Nemtsov. The rivalries have not disappeared and the war has actually heated up. Some of the oligarchs consider the two as not neutral in the fight, but allied to one side. The rivals, led by Berezovsky and Gusinsky, accuse Chubais of favouritism, using 'Bolshevik' methods of rule and trying to impose a new form of authoritarianism. Here rivalries are often accompanied by open and veiled threats. Berezovsky is reminded of his narrow escape. And Chubais himself declared that he had received death threats. Berezovsky openly said that this was "a publicity stunt" by Chubais' supporters. Chubais and Nemtsov threaten to use the Federal Security Service (ex-KGB) in the dangerous fight of the big sharks.

The fight is for huge enterprises and resources yet to be grabbed: big oil companies Rosneft, Transneft, Aeroflot airlines, international airport Sheremetevo, commercial fleet, Moscow river transport, the Kirov railway wagons plant. There was some talk that the Energia cosmic missiles corporation will also put further shares for auction. Even foreign investors were ready to buy. They were already secretly buying up the shares which had been given to the working personnel. Anyway, for the time being at least, the Premier declared that Energia will be kept under state control.

◆

SOME say that the big fights and rivalries of the financial giants have come into the open because they now feel safe and it shows that the danger of communist takeover which united them has receded. Some blame Yeltsin for creating further disarray in the reformers camp, lowering their vigilance by his smug statements that now no return to old times was possible.

The financial wizard, George Sores, on the other hand warns that:

> not a few people are so fed up with the present state of affairs that they would prefer to be again under the Soviet regime. Even while recognising the fact that the communist way of economy is ineffective they pine for the former great and mighty Russia. They think that Russia has suffered humiliation because of weakness, and must be made strong again.

In spite of this Soros is now an optimist and makes big investments in Russian economy. Earlier due to the lawlessness in the investment market here he did not dare risk his capital but lately his view has changed, he says. When Yeltsin invited the young reformer Boris Nemtsov from Nizhninovgorod to join the government as the First Deputy Premier,

> I considered his appointment as a sign that the government now intended to get out of the stage of 'robber capitalism' and wants to establish law and order in this sphere.

Soros, as a beginning, invested 2000 million dollars, and says that a flow of foreign capital can save Russia. The last ten years have been of disappointments and disorders, but Russia can advance to the 'open society' of the West. "Just in this the Russian soul can demonstrate its greatness," claims the great financial wizard. To help the Russian soul to blossom he pledged 500 million dollars into education, culture and health programmes over the next three years. He has already given 240 million in such aid since 1994.

Unfortunately this advance of Russia's soul to greatness, or more precisely, the cost of transition from authoritarian and bureaucratic socialism to the present bandit capitalism has been the cause great misery and ruin for the ordinary people. While production fell to half of what it was five-six years ago, thousands of enterprises were ruined and went bankrupt. Forty per cent of the population lives below the poverty line. Millions are not being paid for months, their only resort are protest strikes demonstrations, huger strikes in which mine workers teachers, scientists, medical personnel, pensioners and others take part. The Army has not been paid for months there have been many suicides. The demonstrations on the October Revolution's eightieth anniversary concentrated on this state of affairs while the Yeltsin administration promised soon an upturn in the economy.

The regime has successes too: inflation is under control, from July onwards the prices have been steady. The rouble has been kept at under 6000 to the dollar and its decline has been very slow. The market is full of consumer goods and imported foods. The rich few are happy and will come to the rescue of the regime if threatened. They will not give away power come what may. A new middle class is appearing which will go to support the open society dream and their newly obtained freedoms.

While the big capitalists are fighting for spoils now, they will unite in a jiffy behind someone they would trust, he may be a democrat or a dictator like

Pinochet, if they feel threatened They kill their own kind in cut-throat competition here Will they hesitate to use terrorism to save their newly acquired wealth and power?

◆

WHILE today the capitalists are divided the Left is also not any less disunited, with their usual debates 'reformism', 'opportunism', 'sectarianism' The CPRF leader Zyuganov made a lot of noise in Parliament about the vote of no-confidence, then suddenly compromised and withdrew in the face of the threat of dissolution

In spite of verbal bravado, most MPs (of the Left and the rest) do not want to go for new elections now and lose their comfortable seats, and flats, cars, salaries and privileges for an uncertain future Why not wait till 1999 when parliamentary elections are due any way, and a year after the new presidential elections?

Yeltsin's reincarnation as a healthy and vigorous President had demoralised many of the Opposition Will all the Communists support Zyuganov again unitedly or look for someone else? The ultra-Left are already calling him names, defeatist, compromiser, unreliable next, if old traditions are followed, could come words like reformist, Right-deviationist, then foreign agent, spy?

While Zyuganov strives to emphasise constitutional and democratic methods of struggle, the ultra-Left are out to march forward to revolution Viktor Tyulkin, the leader of the Communist Workers' Party of Russia (RKRP), at a conference in Petersburg on the eightieth anniversary of the October Revolution had this to say

> Communists openly declare that their aims can be achieved only by means of the violent overthrow of the existing unjust social system, that is, by revolution

All attacks from the ultra-Left could even strengthen Zyugnov if he would present a distinct, clear-cut alternative line before the wide public Unfortunately he wants to carry in his person and mix in his teaching pluralism and parliamentary way and socialism, Stalinist dictatorship, Tsarist Russian empire building and national chauvinism, in various proportions according to the need of the hour

The Communists want to go to the twentyfirst century with basically a nineteenth century ideology The experience of the twentieth century has not been assimilated yet Russian orthodox Communists go on asserting that the Soviet Union and socialist countries collapsed due to enemy agents, CIA conspiracies, and, of course, traitor Gorbachev, reformism, opportunism, deviations from purity of ideology

Come next time, they will not make those mistakes again But to make a 'next time' possible some new World War would be required and then revolutions and civil wars and gulags? These questions are raised here, and on the revolution anniversary the media launched a concerted propaganda offensive to denigrate the October 'coup', as they call it

Izvestia gave a first page banner headline "Communist regimes liquidated 110 million people" and presented an arithmetic of the people killed by Communist and pro-Communist regimes all over the world

TV channel *Centre* presented a three-part programme on Lenin, Stalin and Brezhnev which explained their policies and actions as results of their mental and physical ill-health

> The political regime of the land of the Soviets was conditioned by the serious illnesses of Vladimir Ulyanov Already in 1917 Lenin was suffering from acute nervous disorder and in this condition he took key political decisions his brain sickness conditioned many of his actions and traits of character

Stalin had many illnesses, according to the rules they are to remain a medical secret till the year 2028—but his personal doctor Galina Chesnokova and bodyguard Alexei Rybin are even now available to make some important revelations about his health

And as for Leonid Brezhnev, he was a known physical wreck, an addict to various medicinal drugs, a victim of narcotics His physical degradation brought the country to economic stagnation and many failures in foreign policy Thus we see "three patients of Kremlin" and which explains the revolution and all the misfortunes that followed Luckily, last year's illness of the present Kremlin incumbent and its national and international consequences were not included in the "patients" series

◆

BUT coming back to the question of future revolutions by parliamentary or violent means, Zyuganov or Tyulkin would need considerably more media access, specially TV and radio And considerably more personal charisma

And looking back we find that in history practically all revolutions were made by the young leaders Be it the French Revolution or the Russian or the Cuban or the Chinese Until the Left here win over most of the youth, any Lebed or Nemtsov or Yavlinsky will be found by the oligarchs, and all their money and resources and the media power will make him the new saviour

So, some say why not keep Yeltsin? The constitu-

(Continued on page 114)

SEPHIS

The South-South Exchange Programme for Research on the History of Development

Sephis Grants Programme

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In 1998, ten grants are available for Ph D research Ph D grants will be provided for a period from one to three years The proposal must include a period of research and should make clear that the applicant can realistically complete his or her draft thesis in the given time Salaries are normally not included in the Sephis Ph D grants
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—an academic curriculum vitae,
—a letter testifying to institutional affiliation,
—a referee's report (report sheets can be obtained from the Sephis secretariat or via Sephis World Wide Website),
—a budget,
—a timetable

In addition, applications for post-doctoral grants should include
—an indication of the form of publication (book, article etcetera),
—a copy of the Ph D certificate,

In addition, applications for Ph D grants should include
—a letter of recommendation by their thesis supervisor

Research proposals will be selected by the Sephis Steering Committee, which consists of historians from different regions in the world The applications will be evaluated according to *academic quality, relevance to Sephis themes, comparative potential and contribution to South-South co-operation* The applicant on must be received before *April 30, 1998.*

Applications should be written in English Incomplete applications, application by fax or e-mail and/or too lengthy applications cannot be taken into consideration

The application—and all requests about the grants programme—should be sent to :

Sephis Grants Programme
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A SRI LANKAN ANALYSIS

Dixit's Testament : A Critical Review

DAYAN JAYATILLEKA

The following is not a book review but an article expounding the author's own views in the context of the problems besetting Sri Lanka He expresses himself while trying to dissect the deficiencies in J N Dixit's Assignment Colombo *(a review of which appeared in the* Mainstream *issue of November 29, 1997) The author, a Sri Lankan political activist who was in the forefront of the struggle against Sinhala chauvinism spearheaded by the JVP, is currently the editor of* Lanka Guardian —Editor

'This late in the game
This far down the line '
(The Robert Cray Band—'Laugh out loud')

I do hope that J.N Dixit's valuable, provocative and fascinating book will be discussed and reviewed *outside* the subcontinent, by South Asia specialists, international rationalists and experts in conflict studies It is a case study that warrants serious interest among scholars in Washington, Moscow and most capital cities.

Having read it though, *I could not recall having encountered the name Rohana Wijeweera!*

Surely, surely, this must be some sort of memory lapse on my part, I thought, and proceeded to check the index There I discovered that Ponna Wignarajah and Seema Guha had an entry each to their names in this volume covering those years of Sri Lanka's history that earned it the title 'the bloodiest place in earth' on the pages of *The Economist*, London So do Clint Eastwood, Bismark and the Quackers Peace Movement (sic) 'Peter Kennerman' (sic) gets two But not so, poor Wijeweera In case it is argued that the JVP is mentioned several times, I would reply that many organisations have been listed *and also* their leaders (such as the CWC *and* Thondaman, the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress *and* Ashraff etc) Wijeweera is the exception And this looming absence, of which Dixit seems quite oblivious, shows up not only the main weakness of his book, but also of his line and analysis, as well as of Delhi's handling of the Lankan crisis · One large blind spot (on the JVP) a singularly jaundiced eye (towards Premadasa) and a ramrodding will of steel in matters of Indian policy—are aspects displayed in Dixit's book

More seriously, I would say that Dixit's *Leben-und-Weltanschauung* is of a Nietzschean-Nehruvism, which finds its limits and is defeated, not only by Prabhakaran's *Nietzschean-Dravidianism* (which he manifests in what Anthony Burgess' antihero Alex, in *A Clockwork Orange*, used to call "the old ultra-violence") but by the most powerful force in the Lankan space, the Hydra-headed crisis itself Dixit's book then is the tale of the limits and failure of conventional *realism*—a union of pure will and military force—in state policy, engulfed by the Lankan crisis which is the synthesis of the *surreal* and the *hyperreal*

At a more concrete level, this timely and relevant volume book reveals the following

1 A clear Indian tilt towards the Tamils—understandable because of the Tamil Nadu factor—combined with a prejudice against the Sinhalese 'Tilts' are a standard feature of foreign policy but they are usually on the basis of perceived state-interest and rarely accompanied by actual prejudice against the side not favoured by the tilt

An example of the anti-Sinhala prejudice is the continued commitment in Dixit's discourse, to the permanent merger of the Northern and Eastern provinces as they are currently constituted and opposition to any form of re-demarcation This is despite the amply documented (by Peradeniya's masterly Prof G H Pieris) and hitherto uncontroverted demographic and cartographic evidence submitted to the Government of India in late-1986 by their Lankan counterpart, that (a) the Trincomalee district never had a Tamil majority and (b) that state-aided colonisation in no way involved a loss of lands traditionally owned by/containing a majority of the Tamils and entailed hardly any displacement of Tamils from their population concentrations

2 While the Sri Lankan Government side put up a stone wall at Thimpu, a considerable degree of flexibility had set in as the year 1986 wore on This was due partly to education by circumstances, partly to Indian input and partly to the interaction with the Lankan Left, led by Vijaya Kumaratunga, in the Political Parties Conference (PPC) of mid-1986 Indeed, after the PPC, there was a definite shift in the Sri Lanka Government (SLG) position and the real possibility of a settlement of the issue This was vitiated from two quarters (a) the decisively timed military actions—usually aimed at

unarmed Sinhala civilians—of the LTTE, which generated, understandably, a Lankan military response and (b) the escalating pressures emanating from New Delhi

Indeed in 1986-87 the SLG stance was increasingly reasonable, the landmarks being the November SAARC Summit in Bangalore, the December 19 (1986) Chidamabaram-Natwar Singh Mission and the February 17, 1987 position But it was as if Delhi's responses were propelled by a determination to escalate demands, escalate pressures, deny the SLG space and drive it repeatedly to the wall, until it was literally ready to sign on the dotted line of the Indo-Lanka Accord, as it turned out

3 In early 1987 (pre-Accord), all three prominent players on the SLG side, J R Jayewardene, Lalith Athulathmudali and R Premadasa, made suggestions for multilateral mediation in the Lankan conflict, by the UN and the Commonwealth This was rejected by Delhi, doubtless because it violated India's version of the Monroe Doctrine It must be recalled that at this time, the USSR was a powerful player in the UN Security Council and, therefore, India's rejection of a UN role *could not* have been due to fears of Western imperialist/neo-colonialist intervention!

To strike a personal note, many of the senior Indian officials mentioned in this book rejected the proposal for a multilateral peace keeping force with Indian participation, *as a substitute for the IPKF*, canvassed by me in late 1988-early 1989 as the sole Sinhala Minister in the North Eastern Provincial Council, even though it could have been a viable fallback measure and compromise formula as the crisis hotted up Delhi's line was 'all or nothing', its mindset remained one of a zero-sum game (This proposal was later publicised in my letter of resignation from the Council in early 1989 and received wide press coverage)

4 Dixit's line that the IPKF could have finished and indeed was finishing the job, when Premadasa peremptorily got it to leave—a view shared by many ignorant Sri Lankan commentators and public personalities—is given the lie by the factors listed in Chapters 13, 14 and 19 of his own book! Some relevant extracts follow

> *These intense pressures resulted in Rajiv Gandhi following a two-track policy—continuing military operations, while trying to remain in touch with the LTTE through our intelligence agencies (p 229)*
>
> *After initially eulogising the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement, the Indian media was now turning critical of the agree-ment and IPKF operations against the LTTE The relevance of Indian mediation, the wisdom of India being directly involved in the affairs of a neighboring country, etc came up for questioning Simultaneously, Tamil Nadu politicians started questioning the justification for the IPKF fighting the Sri Lankan Tamils instead of pressuring the Sri Lankan Government to respond to the LTTE's demands India's Sri Lanka policy was now subject to the major disadvantage of Indian public opinion not supporting it (p 237)*
>
> *However, it was at the lower levels of command that I discerned certain confusion and concern about the IPKF's presence and its getting enmeshed in a military conflict with the LTTE Officers at the level of Brigadier and Battalion commanders whom I met told me while they had detailed operational briefings and instructions, they were not clear or convinced about the political motivations and policy objectives of the Government of India (p 249)*
>
> *The agreement failed because there was no cohesion in operational aspects of Indian policies and harmonious coordination between different agencies of the Government of India dealing with the Sri Lankan crisis In fact, there were periods when the Indian defence establishment, the intelligence agencies and the Ministry of External Affairs were working at cross-purposes The Sri Lankan operation is in glaring negative contrast to the harmony, cohesiveness and coordination which characterised Indian policies related to the Bangladesh crisis in 1970-71*
>
> *Rajiv Gandhi could be partially blamed for the contradiction which characterised Indian policies Though he had to instruct the armed forces to confront the LTTE, once they reverted to terrorism, there was perhaps an emotional and psychological inhibition on his part to take drastic action against the LTTE He had an innate sympathy for the legitimate rights and aspirations of Tamils It is perhaps because of this mind-set that he permitted representatives of our intelligence agencies to continue negotiations with the LTTE even as the Indian forces were engaged in military operations against them (p 339)*

How can anyone believe that the IPKF could have done the job had it been kept on for a few months (Dixit mentions six) more by Premadasa, when all the above mentioned factors were still very much in operation? Premadasa's conundrum was that while the IPKF was manifestly *not* solving the problem in the Northeast, its continued presence was, even more manifestly, exacerbating the problem (that is , the JVP insurrection) in the South, including Colombo, threatening state power itself!

5 The vulgar view of Premadasa as a reckless anti-Indian is contradicted by even the most cursory reading of the first letter sent by him to Rajiv Gandhi in 1989 (*Ibid* , pp 373-75) It is serious, respectful, fair and frank One is immediately struck by the high handedness of Rajiv's response Thus *it is Rajiv's reply* that resulted in the Open Polemic between the two leaders, a deterioration of relations which culminated in the violent death of both correspondents Of course, Rajiv's reply was well in keeping with the responses he had sent the Jayewardene administration, to similarly moderate messages! However, in Premadasa, he received a decisive rebuff Let us not forget the relatively more precarious position Premadasa was in when he made his stand, in contrast to the political and economic assets of the Jayewardene Presidency when it was in zig-zagging retreat vis-a-vis Indian pressure in 1986-87 At the time it had a five-sixths majority in Parliament and the JVP insurgency was still in the first stage of killing its rivals on the Left Premadasa, placed in a weaker politico-military and

> economic (following the massive havoc wreaked by the anti-Accord riots and the JVP campaign) situation, adopted a far more resolute stance vis-a-vis Delhi which already had 70,000 troops on Lankan soil plus an allied Provincial Administration in place All of this goes to show that Premadasa's patriotism and cherishment of national sovereignty were of a very different order from that of the Jayewardene administration—and finally that Premadasa's was the far stronger character and personality

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IRKED and even infuriated as we may be at reading this chronicle of coercion by India, it must be admitted that one reason the Jayewardene Government was unable to face down India's relentless pressure was that it suffered from *a crisis of legitimacy* following the referendum of December 1982 Therefore, it was unable to mobilise the broad nationalist masses around it in a manner that is usually quite possible for regimes under external siege Indian and Eelamist guerrilla pressure on the UNP Government, willy-nilly prised open some democratic space in the context framed by (a) the regime's greedy authoritarianism as evidenced by the dismissal of tens of thousands of striking workers, the blatantly coercive and fraudulent Referendum of 1982, the arrogant and imbecilic proscription of the JVP, the banning of student councils, and the shooting of unarmed student demonstrators in 1984, (b) the reactionary New Cold War alliances in foreign policy and defence strategy, tilting away from a sagacious non-alignment, and (c) the tolerance of violent Sinhala chauvinism—Cyril Mathewism and the ethnic riots of 1983, the non-punishment of the perpetrators of the two Welikada massacres and of the arsonists of the Jaffna Public Library

In this context and conjuncture, it is unsurprising that Indian and Tamil insurgent pressure on the JR-Lalith regime was seen as objectively progressive and welcomed by the rational Left, ranging from Vijaya Kumaratunga to sundry non-JVP revolutionary groupings Following the massacre of TELO and EPRLF by the Tigers in 1986 and the JVP's murder of Daya Pathirana in December 1986, the Sinhala and Tamil rational Left, caught in a pincer, were the first to endorse the Indo-Lanka Accord (with its vital amnesty provisions)

While the book is a fast-paced and decidedly indispensable read, my most fundamental criticism of Dixit's view and analysis—and this is also my most basic criticism of Indian policy—is the incomprehension of the Southern crisis I do not mean incomprehension of Sinhala nationalism or the famous 'Sinhala mindset', I mean of the dimensions and dynamics of the Southern crisis which had assumed clearly revolutionary, system-capsizing proportions That crisis was the matrix in which the Tamil issue—including the embryonic Northeastern Council—was embedded But this was not understood Instead of a holistic view, matters were rigidly viewed through the narrower prisms of India's existing policy, of 'making the Accord work' and of the perceived interests of India's allies, that is, the Jayewardene-Dissanaike faction of the UNP and the Northeastern Provincial Council (NEPC) Incidentally in an interesting political Freudian slip, Dixit continues to refer in this book, to a 'Provincial *Government*'! This is something that Premadasa and Ranjan Wijeratne took grave exception to, emphasising that 'there are many provincial *councils* but *only one government* in the country!'

All of India's policy from the late 1970s through the airdrop, the decision to militarily engage the LTTE and the setting up of the NEPC can be understood, all the errors comprehended and perhaps unavoidable The general line right up to the NEPC election and Dixit's high octane diplomacy itself may even be designated as more right than wrong, or more progressive than reactionary, more helpful than unhelpful—if only when set against the regime's arrogant and myopic authoritarianism *and seen as a countervailing factor to it* But certainly not so *the last phase,* not *after* the JVP really got going, the NEPC set up and Premadasa elected *Dixit's last four months in Sri Lanka, India's management of the bilateral relationships with Premadasa and with the NEPC as well as the total trilateral one between Colombo, Trincomalee (NEPC/IPKF) and Delhi—all these were unmitigated disasters*

Dixit's (and General Kalkat's) line, namely, that Premadasa and VP Singh/Gujral should have 'stayed with the programme', gone the distance, reminds me a bit of Westmoreland's line on Vietnam in his memoirs More to the point Kerensky and the Entente Powers did tough it out, and stayed with the programme of Russia's engagement in World War 1, which the Bolsheviks were feeding on The result was, of course, the October Revolution The fact that the JVP not only didn't attack the IPKF but had secret truck with certain Indian elements is as irrelevant as the fact that Lenin got a sealed train from the Germans! *Premadasa managed to do what Kerensky could not,* precisely because he *didn't* stay the course! And he saved the system The argument that

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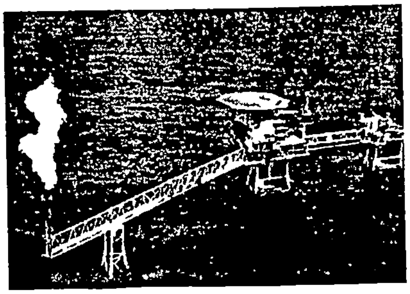

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Wijeweera was killed before the IPKF left is also irrelevant What was important at the time was that Premadasa wrap himself up in the flag, be seen to take his distance from and indeed take on India His Chittavivekashramaya speech and brinkmanship with India took place in *July 1989, the time that distinguished scholars such as Prof K M de Silva identify in their writings as the very zenith (June-July-August 1989) of the JVP insurrection and the moment the insurgents were extremely close to seizing state power* I quote from Prof de Silva's Sri Lanka country paper submitted to the International Conference on Conflict and Conflict Resolution in South Asia (Colombo, July 20/21, 1997)

> Sensing a favourable opportunity to strike at a regime weakened by ethnic strife and foreign intervention, the JVP launched a bloody campaign of extra-parliamentary agitation that reached a peak in June and July 1989 In this campaign which began in July 1987 in opposition to the Indian intervention, over 2500 cadres of the UNP were killed by the JVP, including senior politicians of the party (In July 1987 an attempt by a JVP activist to assassinate the Executive President and members of his Cabinet at a meeting of the government parliamentary party within the precincts of parliament narrowly failed) A state of emergency was declared in July 1989 and for a time it seemed as though the JVP might succeed in toppling the elected government and establishing a Marxist dictatorship While the JVP threat was successfully repulsed by early 1990, the political system would bear the scars of this deadly, close-fought duel for some time to come
>
> A significant point that needs to be remembered is that the death toll in the two JVP insurrections was higher than the number of those killed in all of Sri Lanka's ethnic riots and in the course of the separatist conflict in the north and east of the island In 1971 although not a single politician was even slightly injured and the casualties among police and security personnel—injured and killed—were very small, the number of deaths that followed in the suppression of the insurrection has been variously estimated at between 5000 and 15,000 In 1987-90 the number of those killed in the course of suppressing the much more formidable JVP insurrection, was between 10,000 and 20,000 (pp 10-11)
>
> From the time it went underground, the JVP was intent on a violent assault on the government whenever an opportunity presented itself That opportunity came in 1987-88 with the signing of the Indo-Sri Lanka Peace Accord in late July 1987 and especially with the entry of the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) to the island in August 1987 The JVP spearheaded the campaign against the peace accord in association with the SLFP and other nationalist groups Although they never actually attacked the IPKF, they exploited, the intrusion and potential consolidation of Indian influence in Sri Lanka, to sustain their own anti-government campaign, using terrorist tactics for this purpose JVP terrorism became a prominent factor in the political life of the country, beginning in the Southern province (and the Hambantota district in particular) and expanding to other parts of the country in the years 1987 to 1989
>
> *Indeed no political party in any democratic country, in recent times, has had so many of its supporters killed in cold blood by a rival political group as has the UNP If these figures are chilling enough on their own, consider what the JVP nearly succeeded in doing On August 18, 1987 they came very close to assassinating the President and Prime Minister of the country, and a large number of Cabinet Ministers and MPs as well at a meeting of the government parliamentary party held in a room in Parliament They could in fact have killed the bulk of the government in one fell swoop* As it is they only succeeded in killing one MP on that occasion, a District Minister A few weeks earlier (July 31) they had killed a UNP MP Later in the year they killed another District Minister and one Cabinet Minister Several other MPs and Ministers had escaped assassination, some of them very narrowly They also killed the Chairman of the UNP and later on the Secretary of the party
>
> None of the well-known European terrorist groups—not even the Italian Red Brigades—had had a "hit list" of this size and significance to their "credit" *Turning to South Asia, not even the Naxalites can claim a death toll of this magnitude* To get a comparable figure we have to turn to pre-partition East Bengal (now Bangladesh), in the final stages of their struggle against Pakistan That, however, was a long-drawn out civil war, not a terrorist campaign In Myanmar, the Karen separatists would have a "hit list" of this size, over a forty year period *In Malaysia, the Chinese Communists had a much more modest "hit list" including British and Malayan servicemen during the Malayan insurgency,* but they had to their credit the killing of the British High Commissioner, Sir Henry Gurney, in October 1951
>
> It is no easy task to deal with terrorism as a political force, and the failure of Sri Lankan govern-ments to evolve a coherent policy in this regard is not a matter for surprise All democratic governments have had great difficulty in evolving such a policy even when, as in Italy in the 1960s and 1970s, and—to a much greater extent—Sri Lanka in the period 1987-89, terrorist groups held the country to ransom, and reduced political life and public activity to a pitiful parady of its once vibrant past *In Sri Lanka the government itself was very nearly toppled in July-August 1989, by the JVP* (My emphases—D J)

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'So it goes'
(Kurt Vonnegut Jr *Slaughterhouse Five*)

PREMADASA died not as the consequence of sending off the IPKF—in fact *Wijeweera was eliminated and the insurrection crushed less than four months after he went to the brink with India, shattering the 'patriotic' platform of the JVP* Premadasa died as a result of *another* factor, that is, he failed to consistently grasp the fascist nature of the Tigers But then again, so obviously did RAW chief Verma and Rajiv himself, even after the IPKF's bitter experience! And in the similar case of the Sikh extremists, Indira (I tried for three-and-a-half years to get Premadasa to be a Fujimori towards the LTTE, but failed) What Ché Guevara laconically said of Rosa Luxemburg could be said with slight modification, of Premadasa In his interview given to Maurice Zeitlin, Ché defined Luxemburg as "a great revolutionary who made mistakes and died as a consequence of them" Substitute 'leader' for 'revolutionary' and you have an accurate verdict on Premadasa

Now, three questions arise (a) Was the JVP phenomenon of such importance and the Southern crisis of such magnitude that it should have been the overriding strategic priority? (b) Was it foreseeable or was it perceived at the time of its unfolding? (c) Did India have the personnel who could have helped out—the human resources?

I would say 'yes' to all three questions This is not 'Monday morning quarterbacking' Evidence any decent, serious international journal *of that period* featured cover stories on the tottering nature of state power itself in Sri Lanka *India Today* alone had several, especially in 1989 And all of these spoke to the issue of the IPKF presence being by far and away the main slogan and propellant of the JVP uprising Shekhar Gupta, Mohan Ram, *Newsweek's* Ron Moreau and Tony Clifton, Rodney Tasker and James Clad (now a Research Professor at the Georgetown University) of the *Far Eastern Economic Review,* were all writing very perceptive analytical commentaries at the time (William MacGowman's full-length book on Sri Lanka *Only Man Is Vile,* which was highly praised by the legendary Polish journalist Ryzard Kapucinski, captured the moment fairly well)

How did these writers get it right, while it was still on the wing, while Indian policy-makers did not? Apart from the obvious qualifications of distance and non-involvement, I believe that they were helped by their own vast journalistic experience in other violence-stricken, guerrilla-rich environments outside of South Asia, which gave them a vital *comparative perspective* on what was happening They knew a revolutionary organisation (albeit debased and malignantly distorted) just about to seize power, when they saw one

Were there persons on whom Delhi could have drawn—was there *anyone*—to give it a different interpretation, and more vitally, help it better manage the relations with Premadasa? Was Premadasa accessible to Indians? Certainly the visit by Professors Bhabani Sen Gupta, Partha Gosh and S.D Muni (which Susil Sirivardana and I arranged and they later wrote up in leading Indian papers) is proof of that But the person I really have in mind is Prof Urmila Phadnis who not only understood Lankan politics and society, she had studied the JVP *and* had a good equation with Premadasa But, apart from the odd talk at South Bloc and the occasional dinner at India House, she was kept out of the hard policy loop If it is argued that this is because she was an outsider to the system, then what of the ubiquitous N Ram? Urmila could've played a similar role (but far more constructive, sober and mature) vis-à-vis Premadasa, that Ram played vis-à-vis JRJ And in case some feminist hack argues that Prof Phadnis was marginalised because she was a woman, the crucial role played by Ms Meera Shankar of Delhi's PMO (Prime Minister's Office), mentioned in this book, negates the argument

All that's water—and blood—under the bridge, now

Let me also bring in PN Haskar, though not as poignantly as Dixit has He told me in 1987-88 and then again last year, that he had argued with Mrs Gandhi for a Sri Lanka policy that was limited to intense global diplomatic pressure Almost totally blind now, but possessing tremendous inner vision and wisdom, he holds that history had proved him right

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A muscular young activist of the revolutionary foco I belonged to in the 1980s, the Vikalpa Kandayama, unforgettably posed me a question while in clandestinity "So what's so great about Gramsci, *machan?*" Which I thought got very much to the nub of things In similar vein, one may ask, since Ranasinghe Premadasa got the LTTE wrong and died for it, what indeed is so great about him? Why bother? Why not consign him to a moderatly larger or smaller place in the pantheon and get on with politics—and life—as usual?

Because the Premadasa political experiment touches on two or three of the most fundamental problems of political strategy and philosophy, certainly in the Third World and arguably the whole world system today What are these? The first is 'how to combine *transformation* and *crisis management?'* Conventionally these two are seen as two entirely separate entities Crisis managers are usually status-quoists 'Manage the crisis in order to preserve the things as they are ' The best example would probably be Peru's Alberto Fujimori Premadasa's handling with all its excesses, of the JVP, is a success story which has not been understood We talk of the triumph of Fujimori in turning back Sendero Luminoso, such achievements are trumpeted throughout the world But Premadasa's success in managing the compound crisis that Sri Lanka faced in the late 1980s and 1990s is certainly worth writing a text-book about—*not least because he effected pro-poor reforms while doing so* Premadasa seems to be one of the few examples of people who managed an utterly complex, high intensity crisis while at the same time furthering the project of transition

The second most important thing politically that emanates from the Pramadasa experiment is that in the strategy for transformation, he transcended the established divisions in political philosophy and ideology, that is, the Left-Right, communist-capitalist divide, and even the East-West divide Premadasa's commitment to protecting democracy, to having elections, to the multi-party pluralist system, is quite alien to the East Asian model from which he learnt a lot and respected considerably In terms of political culture, his commitment to having elections on schedule, to eagerly going back to the electorate for legitimacy—all this is close to the Western commitment to multi-party pluralism But there was also an East Asian emphasis on consensus, on leadership, on discipline, on a strong state This second important breakthrough, one of transcendence and synthesis, is very necessary throughout the world Unless political leaders and thinkers are able to do what Premadasa did and really rummage through what both capitalism and socialism have had to offer in terms of ideas and programmes, they'll never be able to come up with the correct synthesis through which the global crisis can be handled Premadasa was able to do this because he cut across those traditional divisions Whether it was Mao or Lee Kwan Yew, he wanted to know about them, he wanted to learn from them and adapt their experience to the Sri Lankan situation An examination of both paradigms is necessary in order to come up with a synthesis Premadasa was doing that His project was not fashionably *post*-ideological, it was *trans-ideological,* eclectic and syncretic in the best sense of the words With the end of the Cold War this approach is both a possibility and a challenge It's a possibility because the old struggles have been superseded, it's a challenge because there's a view that there's nothing to learn from socialism, that the only reality is the free market model and its victory

The third fundamental political achievement of Premadasa and the lesson we can derive is how one retrieves and extends national sovereignty in an economically integrated, interdependent world It is being said that national independence and national sovereignty are now increasingly meaningless and are on the way out, that they either have to be subsumed in regional alliances such as the EU or the state has to be politically deconstructed with sovereignty moving down to the grassroots/periphery Or both The thesis of the neo-liberals is that national

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sovereignty should be replaced with globalisation, that if you place a high premium on national sovereignty you cannot really have a free market economy/open economy, that you will have to have a self-sufficient closed economy This thinking is shared, indeed mirrored, in Sri Lanka by extreme Sinhala nationalists who say

> Away with the open economy, we must have national self-sufficiency, a national economy and national sovereignty

Premadasa was able to chart a course through that—he got the best from the outside world as far as the economic development policy went, the economy became increasingly integrated, even more than it was during the Jayawardene period, with new investors, high growth and the stock market getting off the ground *But he did this while not surrendering an inch on issues of political sovereignty* This was a very difficult task—to separate out the political from the economic—because it seemed to follow that if you wanted to have excellent relations with the West, particularly now that there is intense competition among the Third World countries for foreign capital, you have to trade off old notions of national sovereignty Which Premadasa did not do It looks like he managed to have the cake and eat it too That is something many Third World countries and even the ex-Soviet Union and Eastern Europe would do well to study—because nationalism is going to remain a very, very powerful force *Unless democratic leaders wield the banner of national sovereignty it will be seized by fundamentalist forces who will question both the market economy and democracy* President Premadasa's great achievement was that while fighting successfully to safeguard political independence and political sovereignty, he also promoted economic integration And he did it in a convalescing democracy where one war had ended and another was unfolding it was not stable, prosperous, secure Singapore, Malaysia or South Korea! But he still pulled it off

These are the three major political achievements and lessons which are relevant to Sri Lanka and to the rest of the world today (a) combining transformation and crisis management, (b) transcending the Right/Left divide in terms of political philosophy, ideas and the development model, and (c) how to maintain national sovereignty while reconciling with global economic integration Premadasa's perspective on transformation and crisis management was not the pessimistic counter-revolutionary one of a Metternich or Henry Kissinger Transformation is usually seen as something from outside the system to change the system, something that exacerbates social criticism and cannot and will not resort to crisis management because it is not interested in managing, still less resolving, a crisis But in today's world we have a situation in which crisis management is really impossible without some element of transformation! The global crisis we face today is a crisis of alternatives With the collapse of the socialist system one is left with the capitalist system, which in turn has shown tremendous strain and many violent disruptions Sri Lanka is a very good case in point what we had here in 1987-90 was not a crisis of socialism but precisely a crisis of capitalism! On the other hand, the socialist alternative has collapsed So what does one do?

Obviously if you keep the system as it is, you will have tremendously violent dislocations At a time when socialism is on the retreat, violent movements are bound to take increasingly irrational fundamentalist forms, forms which lead to absolute anarchy and *which cannot even be negotiated with*—unlike earlier forms of Marxist forces when there was some common rational philosophical core which democrats could touch base with finally

In that situation the challenges are to stretch the sytem so as to manage the crises that are unfolding, that is, to be able to handle and even transmute many of the social disequilibria This is particularly relevant in the former Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe which is making the transformation from socialism to capitalism, but is possibly of future use even in the US where the Republican backlash in the Congress—the Budget slashing—is threatening the social programmes that help hold that place together ■

R M PAL "Ancient Wrongs" and NHRC

(Continued from page 95)

do we go about in bringing a change in the situation? First, the dominating section must have the knowledge of the "ancient wrongs" and must accept the need for their redressal and removal Again, it is the task of the NHRC to impart this knowledge to them, for without such knowledge, the NHRC and social activists cannot chalk out a course of action for the future

It is in this context that the NHRC must have platforms where concerned people can have a regular dialogue India is celebrating the golden jubilee of its independence It is only proper that the dialogue must start during the evocative phase of our history so that the people are enabled to look at our social problems with the purpose of assessing to what extent discrimination, prejudice, and human rights violations have been on the increase in the last fifty years ■

Press Comments on Prasar Bharati

G S BHARGAVA

The focus of attention of the newspapers, after they have doled out their daily quota of insight on the sickening political circus, has been on the long forgotten Prasar Bharati Act in the light of its newly constituted executive or Board as it is called The provocation in most cases is the style of functioning of the Chief Executive Officer or the Executive Member of the Board, as the law designates S S Gill, a former Secretary of the Information and Broadcasting Ministry Understandably some criticism of Gill is warranted on account of some of the eccentric decisions attributed to him in the first flush of his assumption of office

But it does not seem that many of the changes he is introducing in the work culture of Doordarshan and Akashvani are either so laughable or retrograde One of them is putting his foot down on the practice of offering tea to visitors, all and sundry, at any time of the working day This is a bane of government offices, especially in Delhi, which needlessly prolongs the meetings The tea vendor, like the proverbial British tea lady, is the most active person in many an establishment But I wonder why he has made an exception in the case of foreign visitors to the offices

When I moved to Delhi from Bombay which was then plebeian and not Mumbai I would wonder who paid for the wasteful pastime During my brief stint as the Principal Information Officer (PIO), I realised it was defrayed to the so-called entertainment expense of the establishment Senior officers had special tea-service, the quality of the crockery varying with the status of the incumbent When the post of a Deputy to the PIO was recreated the officer complained that he had been asked to make do with the set allotted to a Director, inferior in rank

When N T Rama Rao became the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh in 1983, he stopped tea drinking during office hours and said the staff should go to the canteen for tea at designated times It was among the grouses of the non-gazetted staff who launched an agitation against his regime

As far as I know, it does not happen in other countries, not in England or the US and not even in Russia when it was the Soviet Union Even in our country, it is not the practice in private establishments You do not automatically get a cup of tea when you go to meet the editor or his junior colleagues on business

One is struck, especially, by the comments of Sevanti Ninan who is a perspicacious observer of the media scene, largely television and never its poor cousin, radio In her column in *The Hindu*, she has faulted the Board for being geriatric and 'a showpiece of token representation' I don't know how much attention is often paid to the composition and age structure of the managements of private media establishments, including the newspapers Because the government has constituted the Board even if its job is to run the electronic media on professional lines, instead of as a government department, it has to be genuinely representative of diverse interests, including presumably the different languages and cultures of the country As for the age of the nominees, it is not clear what bubbling young talent has been overlooked Incidentally, some of the jilted aspirants—not, of course, Sevanti—who are visibly upset are also of the same age group

It is quite possible that the Board may flop and the Corporation caught in political and other controversies But until then, it should be judged by what it does and not what it appears to be, because after fifty years of aborted moves, autonomy for Doordarshan and Akashvani has become a reality

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MEANWHILE, among the last acts of the Gujral government, while Prasar Bharati grabbed attention, the move to restructure the CBI and the Enforcement Directorate has been scarcely noticed According the *Deccan Herald*, the study group set up in September has given its report which is being vetted 'urgently' by the Ministry of Personnel It has suggested 'new procedure' for selection of the heads of the two organisations and put the Central Vigilance Commission in charge of monitoring probes by them Incidentally, the Santanam Committee had said the same thing during Lal Bahadur Shastri's Prime Ministership, over 30 years ago If the reform gets going before a new governemnt is formed or the Lok Sabha is dissolved, it will be as good as autonomy for the media

The Jammu and Kashmir Government has hiked the power tariff in the State by a whopping fortyseven per cent Of course, this only means cutting down the huge subsidy being enjoyed by the consumers all these years In fact, during the last seven years there was no billing or collection of dues, as it is the case in Punjab now because successive governments there have made it free for 'rural' users The *Daily Excelsior* reported the Kashmir decision a few days ago, being naturally of local interest Outside the State, only Star TV has taken note of it in its news bulletin after a couple of days

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SUDHA RAMACHANDRAN of the *Deccan Herald* has managed to go to northern Sri Lanka on her own, apparently with the approval of the defence authorities Her first despatch I have seen was from a village near Batticaloa town and reported LTTE supremo Velupillai Prabhakaran's annual message on 'martyrs' day' According to her, the speech was screened on video across LTTE-controlled areas and watched by hundreds of people One does not know if the accompanying picture of Prabhakaran aiming an AK-47 weapon has been taken by her from the video presentation or a file photograph It is an usual illustration

More interestingly, when she returned to Colombo the police swooped on her hotel room and asked her to go to the police station for interrogation The clearance of her visit by the defence authorities had not either been conveyed to the police or they did not care I have had similar experience in both Sri Lanka (Ceylon then) and Burma in the early 1960s Insurgency situations obviously make the authorities paranoid By the way the police raid on her hotel room, reported by both the agencies, did not interest some of the Delhi newspapers

Finally, a diary item in *The Telegraph* says Sonia Gandhi telephoned Inder Gujral urging him not to resign and saying she does not want the assassination of her husband to be made an election issue by her Congress *chelas* or the harassed Sitaram Kesri

In this context, a friend who has an impish sense of humour has two solutions to the current political impasse one, for the DMK to offer unconditional support to the Congress to form a 'secular' government and the other for the BJP to announce it will tolerate a Congress Government in the interest of countering anti-nationalist elements like the DMK The Congress qualifies to be in government on both counts Its plea to the United Front to reciprocate its earlier support and back a governemnt of its own reminds one of a story Mrs Indira Gandhi was fond of narrating during the Emergency It was of a person who killed both his parents and then claimed sympathy as an orphan ■

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY Meaning of 'Instability'

(Continued from page 94)

that has been ensured to the millions of the country When millions are deprived of its benefits—by the artificial contraption of the so-called "poverty line"—there is naturally an ominous uncertainty in the country Affluence at one end and impoverishment at the other—that is what the new system of the market has ensured for the people When the common people get restless at this patent inequity of the system, it is not surprising that the polity of this country is forced into instability

When we think of the instability of governance, it is not the question of Prime Minister Gujral not having sufficient backing behind him He may or may not get the benefit of the permutation and combination of numbers in the Lok Sabha More imperative than that, the government over which he presides has to provide the leadership to this nation that has 900 million in the basket of the deprived It is this army which shall strengthen the arm and provide him with stability Minus this, he and his government shall remain the effete and the unstable that it has been for long The agenda of today is the banishment of poverty—when that is achieved, the golden jubilee of Indian independence shall be realised Without this promise, we shall be the unwelcome host for the new century as it dawns over the greater part of the Third World from Latin America, to Africa, right upto Asia Here is the task chalked out for the leader of India whatever may be his complexion or his ideology ■

[By arrangement with *The Hindu*]

MASOOD ALI KHAN Letter from Moscow

(Continued from page 103)

tional court will give the ruling that his next term will not be a violation of the present Constitution At first, in 1991, he was elected under the Soviet rule and in another republic, the RSFSR Now we are neither a 'Soviet' nor 'socialist' republic Some well-wishers are already seriously turning to this solution" If so, many aspirants in the reformer camp will be subdued

Then will there be again a Yeltsin-Zyuganov battle in the second round to go into the next millennium? ■

Understanding Prabhakaran

M.R. NARAYAN SWAMY

With Velupillai Prabhakaran having turned 44 years of age on November 26, a struggle for ndependence he initiated many, many years ago in neighbouring Sri Lanka shows no signs of abating ndeed, after more than two decades in the underground, Prabhakaran has emerged—whether or not one likes his creed of violence—as the world's most daring and feared living guerrilla leader Although he is wanted for the assassination of a Sri Lankan President and a former Prime Minister of ndia, thousands of young men and women worship im as a folk hero and are ready to die at his bidding

In the run-up to the birthday, the LTTE supreme received accolades from the most unexpected quarter—former Indian High Commissioner J N Dixit For years the Indian establishment thought of Prabhakaran as a minor cog of a giant wheel that could be controlled by New Delhi When the LTTE ook on the mighty Indian Army in October 1987, few had imagined that Prabhararan would emerge as the victor militarily, politically and diplomatically In his recent book *Assignment Colombo,* Dixit says

> Whatever he may be criticised for, it cannot be denied that the man has an inner fire and dedication and he is endowed with natural military abilities One over arching miscalculation of India was our underestimating Prabhakaran's passionate, even obessive, commitment to the cause of Tamil Eelam, his authoritarian and single-minded nature, his tactical cleverness and his resilience in adversity

Coming from Dixit, it is the greatest tribute Prabhakaran would have earned in a long time

The last of four children (two boys and two girls), Prabhakaran was born in 1954 to a middle class amily in the northern Sri Lankan coastal town of Velvettiturai His school education was spread across he island's north and east Those were troubled imes Sri Lanka was slowly heading towards an ethnic divide which would ultimately consume the whole of the country Prabhakaran grew up hearing ales of rear and perceived acts of high-handedness by the Sinhalese majority against his own community He was young when he became attracted to nascent Tamil militancy His own graduation from a catapult o an air gun took time By 1975 he had shot dead affna Mayor Alfred Duriappah—the first political assassination in the Sri Lankan Tamil region The LTTE was born the next year The group had probably ess than 50 full-time members when it ambushed and slaughtered 13 Sri Lankan soldiers near the affna University in July 1983, triggering a bloody orgy of anti-Tamil violence in Colombo After that none of the Tamil militant groups had to go in search of recruits—they came in hundreds, escalating the country's civil war And just four years later, the LTTE had grown strong and confident enough to take on the Indian Army It is a success story only Prabhakaran could have scripted

Yet the man remains an enigma How has he managed to convince large sections of the Tamil community to fight on and on and on? How did he pick so many never-say-die guerrillas from what was considered a largely docile community? From where does he get his unending quantity of arms and ammunition? And money? How long will the struggle go on? Will he eventually succeed in breaking up Sri Lanka?

These are questions for which there are no easy answers The LTTE's highly secretive nature of functioning makes understanding the group and its leaders all the more difficult But as time passes by, new facts are emerging about Prabkakaran's mindset and capabilities

◆

In February 1989, parliamentary elections were held in Sri Lanka In the IPKF-dominated north and east, among the Tamil groups which decided to contest was the EROS, which was considered friendly with both the LTTE and the Indian Government The EROS had boycotted the earlier provincial council elections in the Sri Lankan north-east, and so Indian policy-makers thought its participation in the parliamentary polls would give the hustings greater legitimacy (amid allegations that they were being held under Indian patronage)

The LTTE's intelligence chief, Pottu Amman, one day visited the homes of each of the EROS candidates in Jaffna and threatened them As the contestants crowded the EROS headquarters in Jaffna in fear, the group's leadership decided to meet Prabhakaran, who was then in hiding, to know if the EROS should contest or withdraw from the polls The EROS sent a message to the LTTE requesting a meeting and was promptly summoned to the Mullaitivu jungles

Somehow the Indian authorities became aware of the proposed meeting When an EROS delegation was leaving Jaffna in a jeep, an IPKF major demanded to know why they were going to Mullaitivu A RAW officer asked the same question a little later, and requested the EROS members to take along a CRPF officer (who was a RAW operative) with them Both the IPKF and RAW were aware the EROS activists were on their way to meet the elusive Prabhakaran Eventually they were allowed to proceed on their own

The EROS members checked into a sympathiser's house at Mullaitivu town, near which was an IPKF bunker At four in the morning, the inmates were awakened by two LTTE militants who had sneaked in from the back door and who asked them to leave behind the jeep and quietly follow them The IPKF soldiers had no clue to the happenings After an hour-long journey by foot, the hungry and tired EROS members were served breakfast—a cocktail of *urd dal* and rice fried in coconut milk The group again hit the road/jungle track, and after two more winding hours reached the now famous "base one four"—Prabhakaran's secret and fortified jungle hideout in Mullaitivu There were scores of vehicles and armed guerrillas

After a leisurely lunch, Prabhakaran met EROS leader V Balakumar (who has since joined the LTTE) and said he (Prabhakaran) had nothing against the EROS fighting the elections and that Pottu Amman had threatened the EROS candidates only to ensure that the group would make it to Mullaitivu

The news that Prabhakaran had personally blessed the EROS soon spread in the north and east of Sri Lanka, and the EROS finished as the single largest Tamil group in the new parliament The EROS' victory was widely—and to a great extent correctly—seen as a vote for the LTTE, a group which the Indian Government was trying to cut to size In one deft stroke, Prabhakaran snatched a political victory from the jaws of the Indian officialdom. What could have been trumpeted as a vote for the Indian/IPKF scheme of things in the event of an EROS sweep became a thumbs-up for the Tigers

When the IPKF was preparing to quit Sri Lanka in 1990, Prabhakaran told a group of sympathisers why he chose two places in Jaffna—Urumpirai and Manipay—to stage early guerrilla attacks on Indian troops Both places, he reportedly said, had been hesitant players in the Eelam campaign although Manipay was reputed as a stronghold of the EPRLF—a group which the LTTE despised "Once we began ambushing Indian soldiers in the two areas, there were the expected reprisals, including killing of innocent Tamils," Prabhakaran said "It set the Tamils in both places against India and young men (and women) immediately began to flock to the LTTE"

Such were the ruthless tactics that Prabhakaran adopted P Nedumaran, the former Tamil Nadu Congress chief who is also a long-time confidant of Prabhakaran, says the LTTE leader was always a methodical man Nedumaran should know It was with him that the then unknown guerrilla stayed for about six months after a shoot-out in Madras in 1982 A former Tamil militant who first met Prabhakaran at a gathering of the umbrella organisation, the Eelam National Liberation Front (ENLF), in Madras recalls the LTTE boss would rarely join group discussions "When we discussed important issues, Prabhakaran would remain silent," the source said "Once he was playing with four empty soft drink bottles, trying to balance them one on top of the other without letting them fall He was completely engrossed in that It seemed as if nothing was more important to him When someone remarked that crucial issues were being discussed and that he should pay attention, he answered, still engrossed in his balancing act I am hearing what you people are discussing, please continue"

Prabhakaran was like that He would never speak in front of others, particularly strangers He would hear everything that was said, but never let people know what he was thinking or what he proposed to do It was a quality that stood him in good stead He knew what the others thought, few realised what was going on in his mind No wonder the RAW, despite the immense resources at its command, failed to gauge his mind while the Indian military brass thought he was a pushover The reality—however unpleasant it may sound to some—seems to be slowly dawning on the Indian establishment ■

BOOKS ON ELECTIONS

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Where Time Stands Still

SUMIT CHAKRAVARTTY

The following write-up was published in the Republic Day Special of Mainstream *(January 28, 1989) Afghanistan has experienced considerable transformation since then, and the house in Hindu Guzar has in all probability been razed to the ground as a result of continued hostilities ravaging Kabul and its environs, now under Taliban control Nevertheless, this write-up is being reproduced in the year of Netaji's birth centenary as a homage to that outstanding figure of our freedom struggle, and also to underscore the need for India to stand by Afghanistan in its current travails*

If you visit Mohalla Hindu Guzar of Shor Bazar in old Kabul you will get the unmistakable feeling that the clock of time has not moved an inch since the early forties In a fast changing world that indeed is unique Modernity has failed to make any dent there The same dingy lanes, the same uneven muddy path, the same houses made of mud, clay and wood, as it was in 1941

True, I was not born in 1941 having arrived in this world four years later But the old residents of that area would vouch that the surroundings have not changed since then

Why the focus on the year 1941? Because it was in that year that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, that dauntless crusader for India's freedom, had spent more than a month at the residence of one Uttam Chand in Mohalla Hindu Guzar on his way to Europe after his legendary escape from Calcutta

Netaji had escaped from Calcutta on January 16, 1941 He arrived in Kabul on January 27 and spent slightly less than two months there incognito upto March 18 while seeking to establish contacts with Germany That was the time when he spent over one month enjoying the hospitality of freedom fighter Uttam Chand Malhotra (from February 9 to 11 and from February 15 to March 17) at the latter's double-storeyed residence

Fortyeight years have elapsed since then, years of expectation and blighted hopes, a period that saw a sea-change in the political landscape of both India and Afghanistan, a time-span that found a deepening of the controversy surrounding Netaji's demise But that building in Hindu Guzar remains unchanged even if it has switched hands So is the room on the second floor where Netaji had spent so many anxious days and nights as the guest of Uttam Chand

Yes, that building is a bridge between India and Afghanistan cementing further the close friendship between our two countries and peoples That can also be said of the building which housed Raja Mahendra Pratap's provisional revolutionary government in Kabul However, the latter building remains untraceable till today perhaps having perished as an inevitable consequence of the inexorable march of time

Almost a year ago, in April 1988, we—a few Indian visitors to Kabul—made a trip to that house with I P Khosla, the affable, friendly and highly accessible Indian Ambassador to Afghanistan, and his artist wife Gauri Khosla It was a kind of pilgrimage for us The significance of the house in the history of our freedom struggle cannot be belittled

The Ambassador felt that prompt measures ought to be taken to help preserve the building in Mohalla Hindu Guzar. The urgency of the matter is heightened because steps are already afoot to implement a plan envisaging demolition of most of the buildings in old Kabul and subsequent erection of new ones

Khosla thought a part of the building could be taken over and a school symbolising Indo-Afghan friendship run there It could also have a library named after Netaji so as to perpetuate his memory in view of the privation and hardship that he silently underwent in that house while keeping alive the fire of patriotism in his heart after one of the most daring escapes of this century

During his voyage to Kabul from Peshawar and his stay in the Afghan capital, Netaji had a constant and loyal companion and guide in that tireless Pathan Communist revolutionary Bhagat Ram Talwar whose contribution in ensuring the success of Netaji's escape was truly immense and immeasurable Netaji used to call him by his code name Rahmat Khan One of his elder brothers Hari Kishan was executed like Bhagat Singh in 1930 on account of active participation in armed struggle against the British Raj And his another elder brother Ram Kishan, a leader of formerly the Kirti Party and thereafter the Communist Party, was drowned in the Amu Daria river during a bid to cross it while engaged in preparations for Netaji's escape

Bhagat Ram Talwar's book—*The Talwars of Pathan*

Land and Subhas Chandra's Great Escape (published in June 1976)—is absorbing as it details one of the most vial parts of Netaji's escape In his foreword to the book, the late Chinmohan Sehanavis, writer and historian, noted

> the book gives out for the first time an authentic and almost hourly account of the final lap of Subhas Chandra Bose's thrilling escape in January 1941 from India, across the tribal areas to Afghanistan and his extremely hazardous stay there for almost two months before he finally left for Berlin via Moscow The first account of the escape had, of course, appeared in February or March 1946 in a series of articles by Uttam Chand in *The Hindustan Times* The latter was, for some time, Subhas Chandra's host at Kabul, whose help Bhagat Ram was forced to seek under precarious circumstances

The book vividly describes the residence of Uttam Chand One was struck by the fact that it (including the room allotted to Netaji) retained almost the same appearance as when Netaji had first stepped into it

Bhagat Ram Talwar wrote

> The residence of Uttam Chand was in the upper storey of a two-storeyed building in Mohalla Hindu Guzar The floor was occupied by one Roshan Lal, a Hindu from Peshawar The house consisted of three rooms in addition to the kitchen and the bath-room The two of us were given a separate room furnished after the Central Asian fashion The floor was covered with durries and carpets There was a *sandli* (a sort of small wooden table under which there is an *angithi* which keeps the huge quilts in the room warm) in the middle of the room and three thick and low mattresses with cushions around the *sandli* which were used for sitting and also as beds at night Netaji and I used two of these mattresses while the third would be taken by others coming into our room

From the roof of the building one can see the magnificent fort of Bala Hissar and beyond it the snow capped mountain peaks One gets a view of Kabul's sky-line as well Perhaps it was same as the one Netaji had seen fortyeight years ago, at least in that part of Kabul city covering Shor Bazar

The war in Afghanistan is about to take a new turn—for the better or the worse Would the Geneva accords usher in genuine peace and stability? That question is now assuming prime importance At this moment India's active role in improving the situation in Afghanistan acquires special significance Against such a backdrop is it not essential for the Government of India to take appropriate measures and get that building in Mohalla Hindu Guzar, once hallowed by Netaji's presence and stay, converted into a memorial in honour of Netaji, that stalwart of our national movement?

Let us not forget that house—a mute witness to a remarkable part of our history—where the clock of time has failed to move for years together ■

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I K Gujral – India's Prime Minister and
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AGRICULTURE
● Free power for tubewells for farmers ● Free irrigation water ● Surplus Rural Evacuee Land to be transferred to occupants ● Sales Tax reduced on tractor parts from 8% to 2 % ● Punjab Agro Produce Export Corporation set up to provide remunerative prices to farmers exporting fruits

INFRASTRUCTURE Uninterrupted power supply ● Land for setting up new industrial units to be given priority ●Land revenue abolished ● Bulk handling facility and container freight station at Kandla ● Software Technology Park at Mohali ● International & Domestic airports at Amritsar and Jalandhar ● Chandigarh and Ludhiana to be linked by rail ● 4000 kms of road repaired ● New railway bridge over rivers ● Rs 10 50 crores sanctioned for Flood Protection Scheme

POWER Private sector involved in Power sector for setting up of Hydel Projects ● Out of 140 canal fall sites 22 sites allotted to private parties for setting up Mini Hydel projects ● Punjab Energy Development Agency to generate power from 8 Micro Hydel projects on Bathinda Abohar canal ● Joint Venture Committee between Punjab State Electricity Board & Community Energy Hargobind Thermal Plant Stage III at Lehra Mohabat Bathinda ● 600 MW Ranjit Sagar (Thein Dam) completed

RURAL DEVELOPMENT Focal Point Scheme revived Five Focal Points set up in each Block ● Special funds for these focal points earmarked ● Remunerative price for agricultural produce ● Under SPV grid a Rs 48 Crore scheme for 1000 villages ● Pilot project in 60 villages to increase the yield of cotton by providing certified seeds good quality pesticides and other requirements

HEALTH Ninth Five Year Plan dedicated to Self Reliance in people for Primary Health Care ● Mobile Clinic Vans with all modern facilities for each district ● Presence of doctors in periphery areas and medicines for poor ● PM s grant of Rs 25 crore for Jalandhar Medical Institute

EDUCATION Adarsh School opened ● Free coaching for wards of Ex Servicemen for civil services ● Scholarship for wards of Ex Servicemen with excellent academic records ● Nomination abolished in all colleges running professional courses ● Total Literacy drive in the state to be funded by PM s treasury ● University at Talwandi Sabo ● Urdu academy established

MINORITY UPLIFTMENT Housing grant for Scheduled Castes raised from Rs 15 000 to 50 000 ● Over 12,000 houses for Scheduled Castes constructed ● Under the Shagan Scheme Rs 51 00 has been sanctioned for marriage of girls belonging to Scheduled Castes amounting to Rs 3 Crores

MISCELLANEOUS Old age pension for all old men and women ● Remission for prisoners All prisoners above age of 70 years released ● Excise Policy made transparent ● Market Fee (Artia) modified ● Ex Servicemen friendly Land Control & Land Tenancy Act implemented for immediate possession of their houses ● A marriage grant of Rs 3500 to 8000 for daughters of War Widows.

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Sant Ram Sharma
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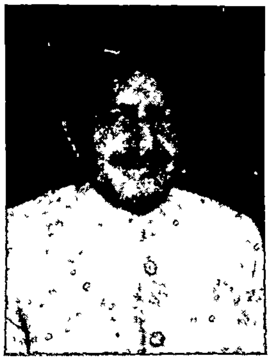

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H P State Forest Corporation Limited was created in 1974 with the main objective to undertake scientific working of timber and resin to eliminate Contractor's Agency

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The incidence of illicit felling has been brought under effective control with complete nationalisation of Forest Working from 1983 onwards The Forest Corporation is converting and selling Deodar, Chil, Kail, Fir/Spruce timber for domestic as well as commercial use, obtained mainly from salvage marking, there being a complete ban on green felling The requirement of timber of Government Departments and Small Scame Industries is also fulfilled The main sale depots are located at PARWANOO, BADDI, BHADROYA, MANTARUWALA and DHANOTU

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The total turnover of the Corporation which was Rs 2 54 crores in 1974-75 has touched about Rs 170 00 crores in the year 1996-97 and the expected turnover during 1997-98 is about Rs 185 crores

With the blessings of Sh Virbhadra Singh, Hon'ble Chief Minister, Himachal Pradesh and under the able guidance of Pt Sant Ram, Hon'ble Forest Minister, Himachal Pradesh and Sh Natha Singh, Hon'ble Vice Chairman, HPSFC Ltd , the H P State Forest Corporation Limited is all set to achieve accelerated targets during the year 1997-98 and in subsequent years

G.C CHAUDHARY
Managing Director

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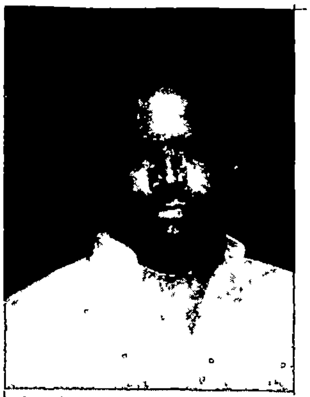

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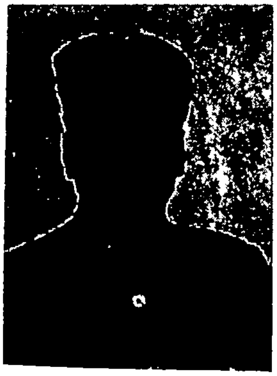

Singhi Ram
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Under the dynamic leadership and guidance of Sh Virbhadra Singh, the Hon'ble Chief Minister, the Corporation is marching ahead to serve the consumers of the State by supplying a variety of essential goods like rice, wheat atta, oil, sugar, dal, cement and even medicines to every nook and corner of the State across treacherous mountain roads, remote valleys and high passes

In 1980 the Corporation began with a modest turnover of Rs 14 crores only In the last one year the Civil Supplies Corporation has made a giant leap and achieved a record breaking growth of 37 per cent and has now crossed the Rs 200 crore turnover mark

The Corporation has an impressive wide network across the State Feeding over 3600 fair price shops through 95 wholesale godowns, 127 retail shops 30 LPG agencies, 12 medicine shops and 4 petrol pumps including Kaza Petrol Pump which is the highest in the world

To preserve the precious forest welath of the State the Corporation supplies LPG facility to over two lakh consumers in the State and 90 per cent out of them live in rural areas, through its network of 30 LPG agencies and more than 130 extension points including the hard tribal areas of Spiti, Lahaul, Kinnaur and Bharmour

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HIMURJA has made concerted efforts to popularise renewable energy technologies through the Integrated Rural Energy Planning Programme (IREP), which has been taken up in 41 blocks in the Pradesh with the financial support of MNES, Government of India Some of the achievements made since inception upto September 1997 are as follows

- 24,831 Solar Cookers have been sold in the State so far
- 2248 Solar Water Heating Systems of different capacities with a total capacity of 3,75,800 LPD (litre per day) have been installed/booked
- 465 Solar PV Street Lights, 3141 Domestic PV Lights and 11,709 Solar PV Lanterns have been installed/booked in tribal and remote areas of the State
- 1,08,687 improved chullahs were distributed/installed in different selected IREP blocks.
- 7946 High Altitude Portable Chullahs have been distributed on subsidy in the tribal areas
- 685 improved wheels (Gharats) with improved efficiency have been installed in different parts of the State
- 79,438 pressure cookers and 31,415 nutan stoves have been provided on subsidised rate to IRDP families
- To harness the hydel potential, 139 small hydro-electric projects having the capacity of 100 KW to 3 MW have been identified, MOUs for 93 project sites have been signed
- 15 Portable Micro Hydel Generator Sets of 15 KW and 10 KW capacity procured from MNES are being installed in the remote and snow bound areas of the State
- Himurja is popularising Solar Passive Concepts Its own office building has been designed incorporating Solar Passive heating features
- 19 Hydrams have been installed in IREP Blocks
- HIMURJA has also decided to participate in the UNDP-GEF projects in terms of preparation of Master Plan for Small Hydro Potential and upgradation of Water Mills to Multipurpose Projects

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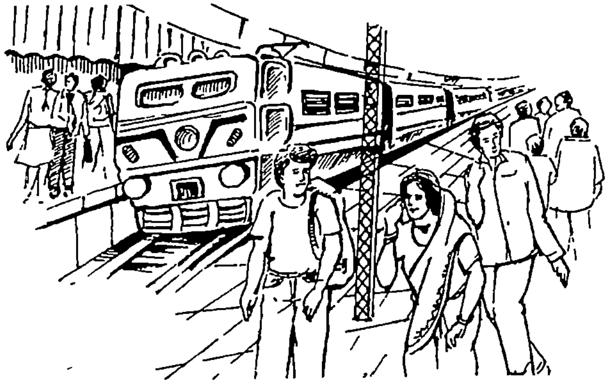

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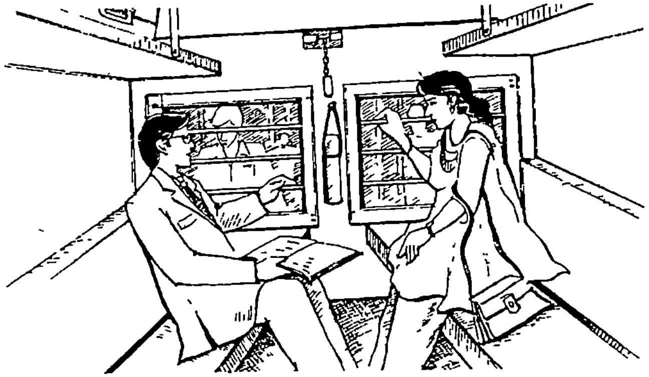

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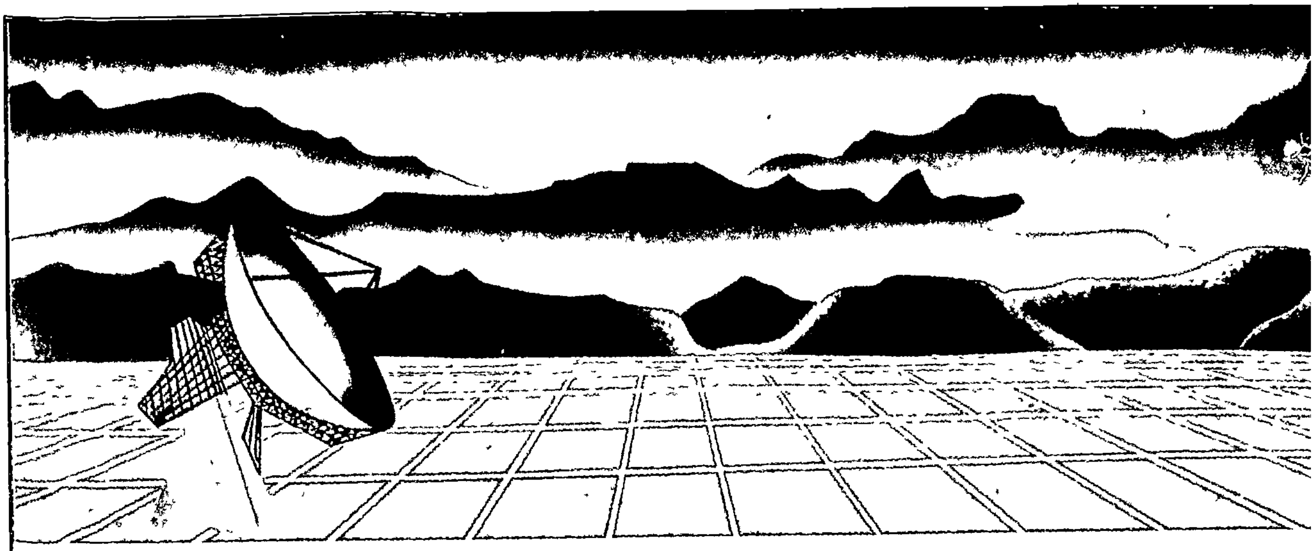

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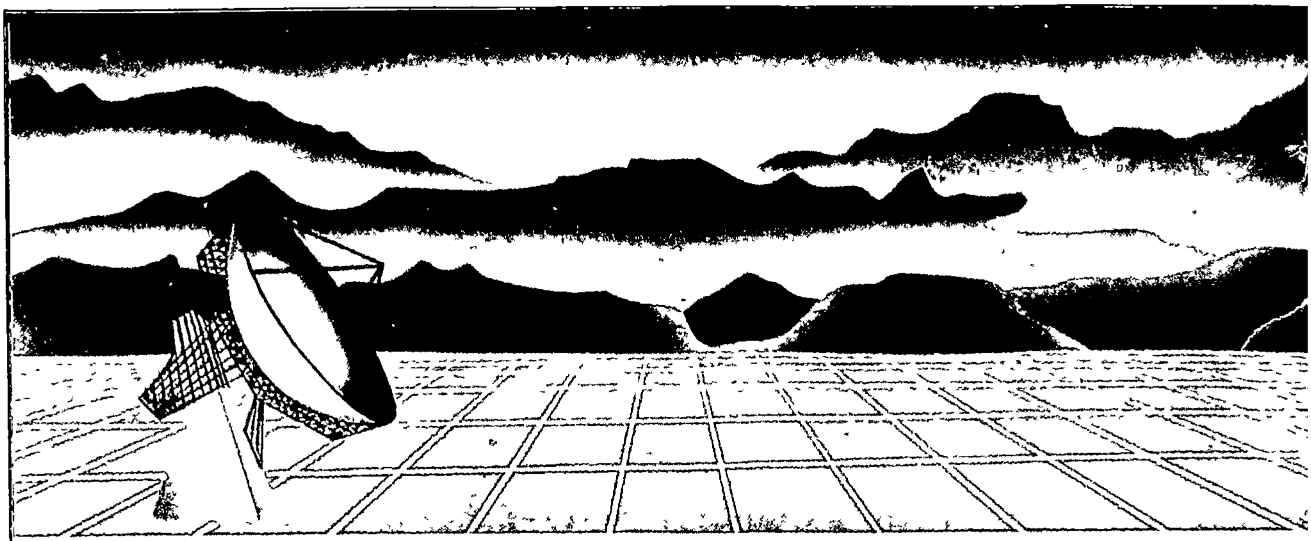

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Edited and published by Sumit Chakravartty *for* Perspective Publications Private Ltd, 145/1D, Shahpur Jat (First Floor), (Near Asiad Village), New Delhi-110049 *Printed at* New Delhi Printers, 20/7 Old Market,West Patel Nagar, New Delhi-110008 *Editor* Sumit Chakravartty *Editorial Adviser* Nikhil Chakravartty *Manager* Jasjit Kay Nagra

Mainstream

VOL XXXVI No 7 February 7,1998 Rs 7

Basic Electoral Issue on Fiftieth Anniversary of Gandhiji's Martyrdom

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Democracy, the People and a National Agenda

GEORGE MATHEW

The Third Force

MAHI PAL

UF and Panchayati Raj : An Assessment

PRADEEP KUMAR

Massification of Electoral Democracy and Political Fluidity

YUGOSLAV UNITED LEFT LEADER'S INTERVIEW : MIRA MARKOVIC ON YUGOSLAVIA, THE WORLD AND THE LEFT

EDITORIAL

The Basic Issue

While India prepares for its twelfth elections to the Lok Sabha, we have just observed, at one level, the fiftieth anniversary of the martyrdom of the Father of the Nation in a ritualistic fashion as was only to be expected As usual the leaders and dignitaries went to Raj Ghat and offered floral tributes at Bapu's samadhi on the day of his assassination—January 30—in a bid to establish that he is still not forgotten And that was duly reported in the media, both the electronic and print, the following day

But what went by and large unreported was the extraordinary and unexpected development thereafter (the observance of the day at another level transcending the ritualistic parameters) streams of people from all walks and comprising every section entering the sacred spot to pay their respectful homage to the person who gave them their national identity shaping as he did our struggle for emancipation from colonial yoke by moving millions of ordinary men and women of this subcontinent and building an unprecedented mass uprising of self-assertion through the weapon of non-violence (even though he himself ultimately fell a victim of the scourge of violence he had eschewed all his life and whose cult he sought to uproot from our body politic) Among those who congregated there were a large number of Muslims who had on that very day celebrated Id-ul-Fitr, their main festival Their substantive presence there was also a reminder of what Mahatma Gandhi had stood for through thick and thin communal amity with special emphasis on Hindu-Muslim unity (to realise which he never flinched in waging even a one-man crusade)

As the country goes to the poll this month, utter confusion prevails across the length and breadth of India that is Bharat With the collapse of the United Front Government at the Centre courtesy the whimsical attitude of the Congress (which deserves the best prize for shortsightedness), and the subsequent trading of charges by the two against one another, the principal party in the Opposition—the BJP—has received a shot in the arm and emerged as the frontrunner in the electoral race If the results of the two recently conducted nationwide opinion polls are to be believed, the latter is coming dangerously close to securing an absolute majority in the Lok Sabha, of course with the backing of its allies However, whether it is able to win a majority of seats in league with its alliance partners or those with whom it is having seat adjustments in the various States, the BJP is widely being anticipated to repeat its 1996 feat and come out as the single largest party in the 543-member Lower House of Parliament But what is far more noteworthy is the irrefutable fact that whereas it had only four allies during the 1996 elections—the Shiv Sena, Akali Dal, Haryana Vikas Party and Samata Party—and failed to win over a single other national or regional political formation after the poll, this time it has been able to come out of its political hybernation, successfully remove the tag of untouchability associated with its name, forge alliances with such major parties as Jayalalitha's AIADMK in Tamil Nadu and effect seat adjustments with regional bodies like Mamata Banerjee's Trinamul

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Congress in West Bengal, while drawing to its fold several prominent personalities from the Congress in particular Notable among the new entrants into the organisation are Bhagwat Jha Azad, Prof M G K Menon, B P Maurya, Rangarajan Kumaramangalam, Aslam Sher Khan All of them happen to come from backgrounds vastly different from the source of the BJP's inspiration And yet their joining the party gives the dominant impression that at a time when the Congress is all set to lose its national entity and the constituents of the Third Force represented by the United Front (including the hidebound Left parties headed by the doctrinaire and Stalinist CPM) are not in a position to fill the void in view of their collective incapacity to present the alternative, it is the BJP which can come up as the Congress' real replacement on the national plane

The belated entry of Sonia Gandhi into the electoral fray as the Congress' star campaigner has indeed made a difference in the sense that it has prevented the premier national organisation's imminent disintegration Her public appearances in different parts of the country are drawing large crowds, and her written speeches have infused some sense of confidence into the dispirited Congress workers But whether this is a temporary reprieve for the party or constitutes a somewhat durable revival of the Congress only time will tell As of now Sonia is trying to go on the offensive on issues which have hitherto embarrassed her and her family, the Bofors ranking first in the list By offering apologies for the Babri Masjid demolition (December 1992), 'Operation Bluestar' on Amritsar's Golden Temple (June 1984) and the anti-Sikh riots throughout the country in general and Delhi in particular (November 1984) following Indira Gandhi's assassination on October 31 of that year, she has also made an effort to turn the tables on her opponents Moreover, she has displayed increasing stridency in her attacks on the BJP and the latter's counter-attacks questioning her nationality have failed to elicit broad endorsement It would be palpably incorrect to accept the Congress' contention that she is presently setting the electoral agenda but there is no gainsaying that she has come up in public perception as a force to be reckoned with, howsoever distasteful this may be to any Indian democrat for whom it is impossible to reconcile with the feudal 'dynastic' culture that her baptism in politics magnifies

Even if the United Front leaders are demonstrating their impotence of late, what needs to be asked of Sonia and those occupying positions of authority in the Congress today (including the party President, Sitaram Kesri) is whether after the apoligies for several of the Congress' past misdoings they would also contemplate apologising for having destabilised the country and thrust on our people highly expensive fresh elections by withdrawing support to the UF Government on a complete non-issue (which is not even being raised by them in the election campaign) The trenchant assault on the DMK holding it almost responsible (without any substantive evidence) for Rajiv Gandhi's assassination (May 1991) has now been proved to be entirely speculative in the light of the judicial verdict on the murder (as none of the convicted accused belongs to the DMK)

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THIS brings us to the issues on which the twelfth Lok Sabha elections are being fought Both the BJP and the Congress have made stability the main plank of their poll propaganda even if it is really a superficial issue Stability for what and whom? That question remains unanswered The UF leaders are feebly trying to highlight their modest achievements but frankly their overall performance was not something for which they can be proud of (although it must be conceded that 18 months is too brief a tenure to leave any lasting achievement and one should not anyway belittle whatever they could achieve in terms of strengthening the federal structure of our polity) But none is highlighting the basic issue on which these elections should be fought That is intertwined with the issue on which the Janata Party Government fell in 1979 (the 'dual membership' question, that is, the ershwile Jan Sanghis' primary allegiance to the RSS), the issue that led to the downfall of the the National Front Government in 1990 (the BJP's strident Ram Janmabhoomi campaign at Ayodhya under the RSS' guidance that eventually culminated in the Babri Masjid demolition two years later), the issue that brought together the Congress and the United Front in the post-election scenario in 1996 (preventing the RSS-backed BJP from seizing power precisely because of its communal approach to national problems under the RSS' patronage)

One is not unduly concerned over the BJP's Right-wing policies One's opposition to those cannot possibly block its entry into the portals of power for in a democracy Rightist or Right-of-Centre parties have every right to win over the people's confidence by exploiting the weaknesses of their Leftist, Left-of-Centre or Centrist counterparts at the hustings However, it is its RSS connection which imparts a totally different—and diabolic—dimension to the BJP overshadowing its strenuous endeavours to offer an acceptable "moderate" or "liberal" image Knowing full well the RSS' pro-British stance and activity during the freedom struggle and the pernicious part it played with other militant Hindu outfits in hatching the conspiracy to assassinate Mahatma Gandhi, the country cannot countenance the BJP as a major contender for power as long as it does not openly dissociate itself from the RSS For in the absence of an unequivocal public proncouncement to that effect, the BJP coming to power in New Delhi would amount to an affront to the nation as a whole—and especially to those countless Indians who hade congregated at Raj Ghat on January 30—on the fiftieth year of Gandhiji's martyrdom

All other issues (corruption in high places, criminalisation of the polity, 'dynastic' rule of the Congress, economic reforms), howsoever important, cannot override this fundamental issue since the country's future is at stake in the wake of the growing revelations of the RSS' disruptive and destabilising role at different junctures of our contemporary history And needless to add, the danger on this score is heightened not merely by the vile anti-Muslim propaganda of the *Sangh Parivar* (exemplified in the crudest form in some of the representative interviews of Hindu fundamentalists in the special issue of *Outlook* weekly devoted to the partition problem last year), but also by the BJP's close ties with the Shiv Sena (with which it is currently sharing power in Maharashtra) whose anti-Muslim pogroms in western India in 1992-93 are too close to the present to fade from public memory

February 4 S C

Democracy, the People and a National Agenda

K SARADAMONI

Many in our country as well as outside qualify India as the world's largest democracy One reason for this belief can be our ability to conduct nation-wide elections at short notice Even if some areas witness some amount of rigging or violence, our election management is remarkable But is election a synonym of democracy? The large funds needed for the elections have not become a hot topic of discussion The coming election which was quite unnecessary is going to cause the national exchequer several crores of rupees It is also causing the people distress, tension and disarray in their life Nobody appears to have cared about these

We cannot complain of having been kept in the dark about the fall of the United Front Government headed by I K Gujral and the subsequent developments leading upto the coming polls We are fed with a plethora of information through regular news, special reports focusing on the candidate and constituency, the caste/region based break-up of the voters, and interviews of lay persons and leaders in the newspapers The electronic media, the TV makes use of its ability to add visual effect to the above The different channels compete with each other in bringing the "leaders" of political parties face-to-face with the people, even if the latter very often belong to the urban middle class It is gratifying to see the young, particularly women, expressing their suspicion and unhappiness or discontent with the present political system and its functioning without any hesitation These also offer us the opportunity to guess what we can expect from the various parties and their leaders

To take the case of the Congress party, all its leaders, young and old, urged and begged Sonia Gandhi to come out into the public from her shelter in No 10 Janpath and save them and their party and thereby save the country While some wanted her to "lead" others wanted her to "take over" We are told by the same Congressmen, after she decided to come out and campaign for the Congress party, that there is great enthusiasm among their workers Whether it is a 'veteran' Congressman, someone who was brought to politics by Rajiv Gandhi when he himself entered politics or an emerging young student leader—all of them speak the same words, namely, that this daughter of the great house of Nehrus and Gandhis would play magic with the people and get their votes for the Congress party The party President in his excitement is said to have offered her the Prime Ministership of this great country Sonia, who knows that she would have been a nobody in the country of her birth, must be laughing behind these people who have neither self-esteem nor self-confidence The opponents of the Congress say that people crowd to the meetings where Sonia is speaking mainly out of curiosity and that she would not be able to get additional votes We shall soon know whose assessment is correct

◆

What is disturbing amidst all these is that no party or leader seems to be concerned about this country and its people This election, though unnecessary, has come in the year when we are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of our freedom from colonial rule and the fortyeighth year after our Constitution proclaimed fundamental rights to our people It was an apt time for us, especially the politicians and other aspirants, to part with the power structure that decides the destiny of this country to do some serious heartsearch This year and the present developments gave us scope to ask ourselves why we failed to realise the constitutional guarantees to the people, where and why we went wrong, what corrections can be initiated, are our notion of democracy and ideas and concepts of development suitable for our country, why violence in general and against the Dalits, women and other 'weaker' sections is increasing

In the less than two years left to enter the twentyfirst century we cannot achieve much But a serious and concerned debate over persisting poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, denials of basic human rights like food, clean drinking water, education, proper housing and clothing, with sensitivity and determination could have thrown up ideas about the new directions we have to adopt Unfortunately people do not figure much in the current political scenario Almost every party seems to be engaged in making alliances and adjustments, breaking them and remaking the same with other parties The people of this country are not watching this high level drama with support or enthusiasm And the leaders are not able to gauge the level of cynicism this is creating among the people At the same time it is wrong to think that the masses of underfed and illiterate people would ever remain dumb spectators They may not know much about the meaning and evolution of democracy and that we have taken it from our erstwhile colonial masters, the British, and the functioning of their Parliament But they know that their votes means something and that it is sought from time to time They also know that the people for whom they give votes are expected to raise their burning problems—price rise, unemployment, schools for their children,

PLEDGE

Fifty years ago, on January 30, 1948, was brought down the greatest Indian of the modern age, Mahatma Gandhi, by an assassin's bullets The dastardly act was not the result of any momentary provocation The motivation was provided by a mind-set marked by intense hatred of the principles and ideals of equality and equity Ever since Gandhi had entered upon the national scene he was sought to be confronted and combated by an alternative world view based on a distorted concept of religion and on racial chauvinism under the sobriquet of *Hindu Rashtravad* and the Two-Nation Theory

The same mind-set was at work in December 1992 at Ayodhya when the Babri Masjid was brought down and the event was presented as the first step towards establishment of a *Hindu Rashtra* It is the same criminal mentality which has engendered hatred and committed violence against those who do not fall within the purview of its chauvinist concept of sectarian nationhood, a concept which threatens the secular basis of Indian nationhood and seeks to disrupt the constitutional framework that has sustained the unity, integrity and stability of India

Realising that this criminal mind-set is adopting devious strategies to mislead the nation,

Conscious that democracy is in danger and that there has not been adequate exposure of the source of this danger,

Recognising that humanist nationalism, the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi, is the essential condition for the survival of India's social fabric and the maintenance of its dignity

I solemnly pledge, in this fiftieth year of Gandhi's martyrdom, to undertake and support the noble principles and the pluralist culture for which the Father of the Indian national laid down his life I pledge also to struggle against the sinister conspiracies which are out to disrupt India's social and political framework of equity, inter-communal justice and friendship and cooperation with nations

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health care facilities, etc —in Parliament and bring about improvements in their life But I am sure they would have started to shake off this belief Some or many of them may be seeing the functioning of Parliament, thanks to Doordarshan When they expect their problems to be raised by the people they voted and sent to this august House, they were left to wonder whether Parliament was a circus or a wrestling ground They learned more, that the might of the lungs or muscle was great, and that discipline had no place anywhere Through these two months they are convinced that 'power' was important and that has to be gained somehow If the TV cameras are to be trusted, we saw them articulating the need to gain power Without power you cannot have access to any place "You go to the gate of any important person, you are asked who you are If you are a nobody, the entry is denied" An ordinary woman had another view To her power means money, and it is "fun" to play with money They are also made to understand that "opportunism" is a desirable thing No word is heard about ideology, honesty in public life, and decency in social behaviour Equality, justice and freedom appear to have gone out of their vocabulary as those no longer belong to the vocabulary of our leaders

These are not the creation of our ordinary people They have learned it from the leaders, either through direct interaction or otherwise I would like to come back to the need for introspection If we ask the question—what have been our achievements in the last fifty years?—both the *sarkar* and others including the bureaucracy, and academics/researchers would have a long list Consciously or unconsciously we leave out an important fact, that we have failed to give a sense of belonging to the people of India, particularly those who were born after independence We glorify Mother India and sing beautiful songs and dance exquisitively in her honour But apart from those momentary excitements what do we feel about this country?

There was a need to decolonise the mindset when we became free The result today is that we have perfected a servile attitude We did not develop the quality of positive criticism or create fora for its expression The result the people in many parts, even if they feel otherwise, display devotion to the leaders and listen to them The leaders are experts in exploiting this too That is how Sonia Gandhi and Jayalalitha are able to attract people Titles, positions and hierarchy are strong in people's minds Everywhere there is absolute lack of accountability, which naturally give scope for unabated corruption, nepotism and the like Talks about corruption are today heard more than before But no attempt is made to locate the root causes of corruption or get rid of the loopholes in the system which encourage corruption All these have resulted in the people becoming more and more frustrated, discontented and alienated

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It is in this atmosphere that all our political parties vie with each other in convincing the foreign investors that they need not worry, and that whoever comes to power there would be no change in our economic reforms geared to the structural adjustment programme Of late, that is, after the bursting of the South Asian miracle, some persons, from whom we could never have thought it, have started suggesting caution in the pursuit of the SAP Even before the South Asian developments began, almost all countries which had accepted the SAP and restructuring of their economy as per the conditions laid down by the IMF and the World Bank, have started experiencing a collapse of their economy The entire world is experiencing widening disparities between the rich and the poor and growing unemployment Only a few months ago a European Summit was held in Luxemburg to discuss the problems of growing unemployment among their youth Homelessness is a harsh problem in these countries We have to remember that ours is a country with nearly fifty per cent of the people living below the poverty line, and that they have never known security in life and that we do not have any social security measures covering all our people The social consequences of the present developments are either not seen or deliberately ignored

Decolonising the mindset and giving to the people especially a sense of belonging and pride should get top priority in an agenda for the next fifty years These are not mere words or empty slogans We have to seriously rethink about our understanding of democracy and development The question of equality, gender justice, environmental problems, employment should occupy the central place in our planning for the future At all levels accountability and transparency should be brought in Above all, we have to start thinking of our abundant resources—both natural and human—in a positive manner

We have to start thinking of a development which cannot be measured in terms of money (GDP) or volume of goods and services produced, but can be understood by the contentment, harmony and good sense prevailing in the society ■

The Third Force

GEORGE MATHEW

In the run-up to the mid-term elections for the twelfth Lok Sabha, beyond the simulated clash of the Congress and BJP monoliths, there is a natural movement in the Indian polity, almost at the subterranean level, of realigning social forces. The present phase of our national evolution, in a long and uneven historical process, is likely to mark a decisive turning point when politics will belatedly begin to correspond to social realities.

The fifty-year experience of governance has taught us that a single political formation with pre-determined ideas cannot bring into its fold all the people of this vast and diverse country. For, India with its subcontinental dimensions as well as with its plurality and multiple identities presents a unique social setting for nation-building. It cradles various regional cultures and nationwide religions with hoary history and primordial loyalties. In imperious disregard of this reality, centralisation was the watchword of the largest political party in India, born perhaps of the fear of a second partition of the motherland. Inevitably, it served only to perpetuate socio-economic inequities. The wave against centralisation has steadily brought its reverse process to a stage when the evolution of a healthy federal system has been feasible. Neither a centralised party structure nor a centralised polity can hope to prevail any longer. Nowhere in the world our kind of a centralised political system exists concurrently with a functioning democracy. The coming elections are an opportunity to end this anomaly.

At the subliminal level, a positive and wide-ranging development has been taking place as a result of spatial mobility, spread of education, social awakening and the unprecedented revolution in the means of communication. The sharp edge of rigid categories like caste, religion, sects or even language is being blunted in the daily experience of the common people. They seek to transcend these barriers in their quest for a livelihood with some dignity and peace. It is the unenlightened and frustrated leaders who invoke the names of gods, places of worship, caste arrogance, family connections and feudal lineage as the argument for outdated loyalty to a patron or protector.

Indian plurality is so multi-dimensional that it weaves a colourful social pattern unknown in other parts of the world.

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> A Karnataka Brahmin shares his Hindu faith with a Bihari Kurmi, but feels little identity with him in respect to appearance, dress, customs, tastes, language, or political objectives. There would similarly be little in common between a Jharkhand tribesman in north India and a Bodo tribesman of Assam despite their aboriginal identities, between a Kashmiri Muslim and a Moplah of Malabar, who both owe allegiance to the Islamic faith, between a Naga Pentecostalist and a Syrian Orthodox Keralite, both Christians separated by thousands of miles and nearly as many shades of complexion. At the same time a Tamil Hindu would feel that he has far more in common with a Tamil Christian or Muslim than with, say, a Haryanvi Jat with whom he formally shares a religion.
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> Affinities between Indians span one set of identities and cross into another. I am simultaneously Keralite (my geographical State of origin), Malayali (my linguistic-cultural affiliation), Hindu (my religious faith), Nair (my caste), Calcuttan (as a result of my schooling and by marriage), Stephanian (because of my education at Delhi's St Stephen's College), and so on, and in my interactions with other Indians, each or several of these identities may play a part. Each, while affiliating me to a group with the same label, sets me apart from the other, but even within each group, few would share the other identities I also claim, and so I find myself again in a minority within each minority. (Shashi Tharoor, *India: From Midnight to the Millennium*)

Yet, social progress demands the capacity for creative social relationship within a multi-cultural milieu, outgrowing divisive loyalties. Complexities of this nature cannot be resolved on the political plane by one or two political parties even if they manage to grow or look like banyan trees.

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INDIA's democratic polity is witnessing the flow of three currents. First, the Indian National Congress (now Congress-I) which had the initial but short-lived capacity to gather under its wings diverse forms of social life. However, its decline began as it maintained its centralising character that too under one family and one leader ignoring the diversity of the country and the aspiration for individual and collective identity and autonomy of the people. Second, the quasi-political Bharatiya Janata Party, the liberal face of hardcore Hindu militancy with all its centralising, homogenising and essentially anti-democratic propensities. It is trying hard to spread its wings through all manner of strategies. Deeply rooted in the ultra-Hindu upper-caste mentality it seeks to hide its ideological bankruptcy as well as its post-Aryan chauvinism beneath borrowed political concepts which seem to change with each election

It is at this crossroads of these twin currents that the Third Force comes into its own It represents an attempt to faithfully reflect the true nature of Indian society The evolution of this societal force has been a response to the crises in Indian polity from time to time caused by the rule of a centralised party with democratic pretensions The year 1977 marked a successful beginning in the fight against the authoritarianism of centralised rule by a monolithic party led by a whimsical leader without vision Thereafter, the National Front-Left Front combine, and now the United Front, represents the forces pitted against hegemony in India's party system Each time the base of this popular challenge expanded, incorporating more and more diverse but democratising factors in national life Quite naturally, the parties who came together and the forces they represented had at their core a common commitment to human equality, social justice and the secular character of the Indian state which is equidistant to, and equally respectful of, all religions, upholding the nobler aspects of the traditional culture and the guiding principles of the 1950 Constitution

The Indian Parliament is not elected as the sole legislature of a unitary state but as the representative of a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-cultural, multi-linguistic society with a multi-layered system of governance The 25 States and Union Territories have their own contexts and compulsions to choose their representatives After the elections they come together to form a government which represents not the will of any one leader and his or her following but the shared social vision of the true India that is exceptional in its diversity

It was not yesterday that this Third Force was born It emerged from the matrix of India's history It was part of the independence movement By definition, it was Left-of-Centre, socially conscious, justice oriented The Communists were part of it, the Socialists were its vanguard Later, regional formations in protest against the unitary thrust of the Congress, the Dalits and religious minorities whose voices were inaudible under the umbrella party began to form political organisations, searching for a genuine platform Their natural choice was a combination of similar political formations

The Centre-periphery dialectics have been a constant feature of India's politics Geographically, the Hindi heartland and culturally the Brahmin-upper caste combine dominated the Centre, while the north-east, north-west and south were literally at the margins At another level, the lower castes, the Dalits, the minorities were at the periphery of power The Centre-periphery positions are being reversed As a result, Karunanidhi and Farooq Abdullah, Moopanar and Prafulla Mohanta, Chandrababu Naidu and J H Patel, Paswan and Mulayam Singh are at the centre-stage This development is undergirded by the united Left from Tripura and Bengal to Kerala This shift has happened not through any violent revolution but through a vibrant democratic process Here, both the Congress and the BJP have become irrelevant

As is evident, unitary parties can survive only under a domineering leader—they may be charismatic but would not permit other leaders to come up at the national or subnational levels On such terms, the Congress thrived under Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi, the BJP under L K Advani or Atal Behari Vajpayee But the confederation of parties that come up in response to people's aspirations, provides space for the growth and development of leadership at all levels Those elected will thus represent the respective States on the strength of their character and ability They are not foisted from above They would be able to work a viable model for India's federal political process At the same time, it cannot be forgotten that the clash of egos and selfish arbitrariness often weaken the process of these regional parties discovering their common ground Prakash Singh Badal and Barnala, George Fernandes and Nitish Kumar, Ramakrishna Hegde and Chandra Shekhar are natural allies of a truly federal formation But sometimes men at the helm act like politicians who can see only upto the next election and not like statesmen who can look farther to the next generation Indeed, they drive away their dynamic colleagues That is a contradiction which the federal process has to outgrow

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THERE is a growing realisation that it is not the large parties that India needs but a truly representative federation of parties, as the hegemonic and hierarchical formations cannot reflect the aspirations of regions or localities and their people During the past 50 years we have also learnt that monolithic parties are prone to dictatorship, corruption, lack of accountability and inefficiency The rule of the Congress at the Centre and of the BJP in the States bear testimony to this There is thus a growing preference for compact and proximate political parties with clearly articulated ideology and programmes, which can be called to account for their action The confederation of parties have a more people-oriented approach, they take the smaller political units in the State, or local level, seriously The constituent parties themselves act as a mutual check and balance A steamroller majority is a bane of multi-party democracy The equilibrium among equals is a countervailing force against rule by men instead of the rule of law The Third Force thus becomes a force against corruption

The eighteen-month performance of the United Front at the Centre proves this point The period was relatively free from corruption, financial scams and other scandals People could go about doing their daily business in greater freedom Since the parties controlling the States had their say at the Centre in equal measure, the interests of each State were protected, the Centre could not ride roughshod over the States The period was free from civil strife, large scale social tensions and violent upheavals The sad surprise felt by many when the UF Government fell showed the regard the citizen had for such a novel but sober system of multi-party governance

Will the attempts to resurrect the Congress or revamp the BJP impress the people? That remains to be seen Whatever the middle class media may project, whatever propaganda stunts the parties may use with the support of big business, the voting pattern in each State is likely to spring surprises The common man keeps his options so close to his chest that the nation wakes up after the polling to see what he has done contrary to the predictions

The thirteen or more parties from the States coming together at the Centre will be possible because there is an underlying oneness among the multifarious identities These identities are creating a boiling-pot situation—boiling, but not melting The stability of India as a country is inbuilt in the invisible commonality

The fact that despite three or four ordeals by fire, the fourteen-member confederation of parties stood their ground is not yet fully appreciated Without any organic unity they faced extreme challenges, because of their social moorings and their ideological roots The Third Force should, for its part, be well-prepared for the tremendous responsibility to take India to the next millennium and remain solidly together through this election as indeed they did in May 1996, in May 1997 and in late 1997 Above all, they must remind themselves that the Third Force is a child of the historical process guiding the destiny of India ■

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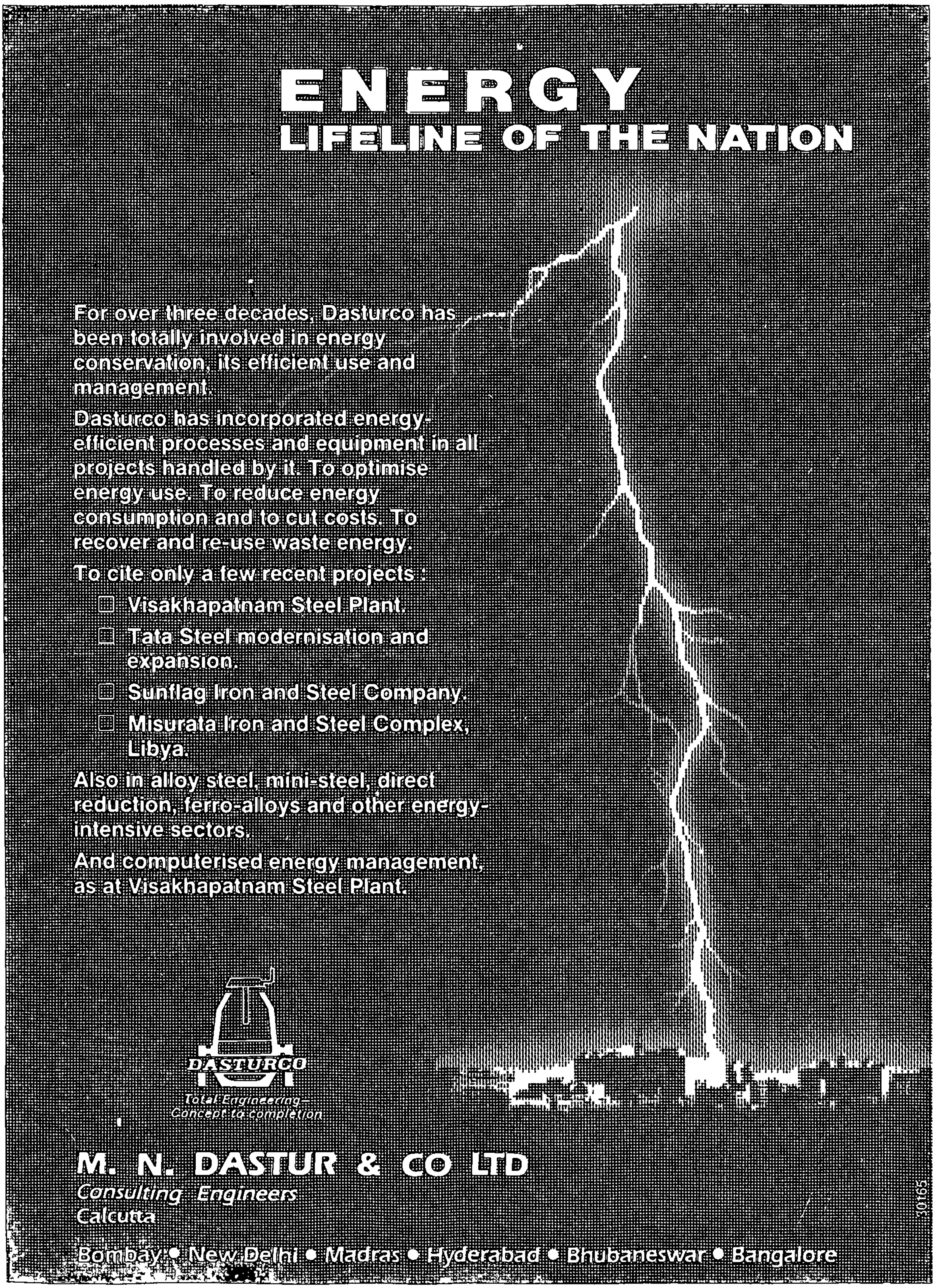

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A New Electoral Agenda

RAJINDAR SACHAR

At last the electoral process has been set in motion Voters will no doubt decide their choice soon But certain conclusions can still be safely drawn The people in general are sick of the petty games and one-upmanship of every political party They wish to express their indignation against various political parties in dragging the country to fresh elections so soon in pursuit of their petty ambitions The electorate also knows that any future government will be composed of various political parties more or less evenly balanced The voters, therefore, no longer believe that voting for small groups will not give them an effective say in policy-making

No, I am not suggesting the formation of a new political party Nor am I naive enough to imagine that any new face by merely proclaiming his or her commitment to the cause of the people will be immediately acceptable to the electorate The electorate will much rather go alongwith the devil they know as against one who makes his appearance suddenly on the eve of the general elections In that situation some new and radical answer has to be found

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THERE are scores of NGOs, human rights organisations and environmental groups working with dedication for the vulnerable sections of society, like tribals, fishermen, oustees In this atmosphere of pessimism at the selfishness of politicians, the work being done by these bodies gives cheer, confidence and faith in the resurgence of the country These organisations have a fair amount of acceptance amongst the masses

They are working in the field to see that in the name of development, millions of people are not displaced or that the tribal areas are not thrown open for loot by big corporations or that forest wealth is not destroyed wantonly by the mafia in league with local politicians Then there are the organisations working for human rights to ensure that the liberty of the poor, the Dalit, the labourer, the slum-dweller and the homeless is not made a mockery of by the state agencies And yet their impact at the national level is minimal

The voters will be more than inclined to vote for their leaders and colleagues who have been fighting for their rights and sharing their pains and sufferings, not by making casual helicopter visits, but by actually being a part of their daily life and surroundings over many years It is true that if each organisation was to contest on its own independent label, the electorate may not take it seriously But I also know that the electorate will be ready to place its trust in honest persons, provided the voters were reasonably assured that a fairly large group with a common agenda could be sent to the Lok Sabha

It is apparent that if no change is introduced by the induction of new forces in the election arena, the situation may remain the same as at present and we would then have the same horse-trading and unholy adjustments I feel that the time is now apt when a new force can make an effective dent in the electoral field It is now unarguable that a coalition government at the Centre is the only possibility

I welcome this development, which is more in tune with the federal principles of governance It will enable the smaller groups to make their presence felt The shameless scramble for retaining power amongst the major parties expose the myth of the so-called national parties as the only ones concerned about national interest The thinking is a slur on the regional parties which have as much interest of the nation at heart as any other

The green movement of Europe which has become an effective political force is a pointer to what can happen in our country if various NGOs and other human rights organisations can sit together and evolve a strategy as to how they can similarly become more effective in the governance of the country These NGOs have their own spheres of influence and should have a fair chance of success A large segment of the middle class, intellectuals and academicians who, though not involved in the day-to-day programmes of these organisations and yet appreciate their selflessness and idealism, will support them as against the present cynical and selfish lot of politicians These organisations should not lack in resources both in personnel and money if their claim that they have a mass base is correct Of course, it is a different matter if their activities are limited to press statements and seminars In such a case, the exercise is still worthwhile because one will benefit by facing the ground reality

Similarly, women's organisations must also play an independent role in these elections They have seen how a modest demand of one-third representation in the legislatures has by hypocritical excuses been denied by the political parties They must now stop. pleading with the political parties They must unite their organisations and put up their own candidates on the slogan of women's empowerment and co-relate their programme with the NGOs and others I have no doubt that such a powerful platform will generate and release suppressed social forces which will help in bringing about an equitable society, free from gender discrimination Women's organisations have already a 50 per cent electorate sympathy and a powerful platform of women pradhans and panchayat members

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HERE then is an opportunity which can only be missed by various NGOs at their own peril To avoid elections by mouthing the usual slogan of politics being the refuge of scoundrels is to run away from the reality that, whatever one may say, politics is an inherent part of our democratic system Dr Lohia always maintained that principled politics demands that a political party accept the slogan of "spade", "prison", and "vote" The present political parties are now solely concerned with 'vote' and that is why all ideology has gone out of their programme and politics has been reduced to a cynical game of cliques with the sole motive to cling to power

The NGOs and human rights organisations, however, are genuinely following the slogan of "spade" which is their constructive programme and involvement in the daily fights against injustice They also follow the slogan of "prison" because they are willing to offer any sacrifices including going to jail alongwith the poor But their impact on the nation is negligible because they are ignoring the third slogan of "vote" It is high time that these organisations take the initiative and evolve a strategy for the coming elections, and thus set a new agenda for a resurgent India ■

(Courtesy *The Hindustan Times*)

The Electoral Scene

T.N. KAUL

The electoral scene in India today is somewhat depressing, but it is also interesting and could result in some desirable and necessary changes Things may get worse in the near future, but they could later lead to a better picture The present is a period of transition from the Congress Raj to coalition governments We may be in for a different kind of coalition from the last one, or even a one-party rule again, of the BJP or the Congress with their respective allies at the Centre, and regional parties or coalitions governing in most of the States No one can predict with any degree of certainty the exact shape of things to come after the elections The Indian voter is predictable to a point, but not entirely He or she has proved the forecasters wrong before and may do so again However, some trends are visible and could develop further

Firstly, the Congress party seemed to be on the verge of splitting Some people blamed Sitaram Kesri for it, but that is not entirely true He may be too old and lacking in charisma, but at least he had the courage to hold elections in the party hierarchy after a lapse of over twenty years and deserves credit for this After that there were bound to be differences between those who wielded power and influence before and those who were newly elected, specially in the absence of a charismatic leader who could unite the party Furthermore, the quality of politicians as a class sank so low in all the parties, that their own re-election became supreme in their minds while loyalty to their party or its ideology was only of secondary importance This may compel them to cleanse the party of opportunist elements and win back some who have left it This cleansing was long overdue and may lead to the Congress and other parties becoming more homogeneous and united in the future

The Congress party would take time to reform itself, but Sonia Gandhi's active participation may expedite this process and unite like-minded Congress leaders and the rank and file Bofors and Babri Masjid issues do not have the same force as before The recent scams in Bihar, Assam and elsewhere are more fresh in the minds of the people and are more likely to influence the voter The BJP's threat to raise the Bofors issue could boomerang after the leakage of the Jain Commission report It is important for the BJP to remember that personal attacks on Sonia Gandhi or her late husband would produce a pro-Congress wave among the people Electioneering could and should become cleaner now than in the eighties or early nineties, as the Election Commission will be more vigilant and effective than in the past The Indian voter must be free to vote as he or she likes and will not be swayed by mudslinging slogans or threats

Another important change is the split within the United Front The RJD led by Laloo Yadav has revolted The Samajwadi Party led by Mulayam Singh Yadav may make alliances with the RJD and the Congress In any case, the UF will suffer from infighting among some of its constituents in the States, as local and regional considerations predominate there

The third important development is the strengthening of the caste factor, specially after the Mandalisation of politics Caste still plays a strong role in elections, stronger than even religion or ideology In time, however, the caste factor may give place to the economic factor, uniting those below the poverty line, the landless, the unemployed, the under-employed and other weaker sections of society

Last, but not the least important, is the emergence of the BJP as an attractive forum for various disgruntled and self-seeking politicians from other parties, particularly the Congress, as also some JD members in Orissa and a few Muslims who hope to get tickets from the BJP to have better chances of winning a seat This trend is not healthy, but if it leads to the BJP revising its basic plank of *Hindutva* to *Hindustaniat,* it would indeed be a healthy and welcome trend The BJP says that both concepts mean the same thing If so, then why do they not have the courage and honesty to use the more widely accepted and secular term? It is doubtful the RSS will allow the BJP to do so Merely projecting Atal Behari Vajpayee as their Prime Ministerial candidate is not enough He is indeed a man of integrity and ability, but is he in a position to widen the concept of *Hindutva* into *Hindustaniat?*

It is being said by some that the BJP has not had a fair chance to prove itself as a government at the Centre Of course thirteen days' rule at the Centre could not produce a miracle, but can even thirteen months do so? The UF had a year-and-a-half, but failed to produce a stable government or present some important bills in Parliament to fulfil its promises, like the Women's Representation Bill Inder Gujral is also a man of integrity, ability and experience, but he was afraid of breaking up the UF consensus and lacked the courage to resign that guarantee is there that a BJP Government, with Ataljee as the Prime Minister, will fare any better? What is likely is that the BJP's main concern will be to consolidate its own position and entrench itself at the Centre and not risk weakening its ranks

It seems likely that even the BJP, with all those who defect to it from other parties will not get an absolute majority at the Centre, but it may be able to muster a majority with the additional support of some Independents and more defectors The same may be possible for the Congress, if it joins hands with other secular parties such as the UF and the Leftists However, the UF and the Leftists seem afraid of joining hands with the Congress It is possible that after the elections both the UF and the Leftist parties may have second thoughts, depending on the election results, and the Congress may also be more willing to join hands with them in order to share in the power structure at the Centre It would be in the interests of the Congress to project a younger and more charismatic leader as a possible future Prime Minister, should it come to power in alliance with some of the other secular parties If the UF, the Congress and the Leftist parties have learnt a lesson from their recent experience, then they must support each other from *within* a coalition government and not merely offer support from outside, which will only lead to instability Similarly, the BJP must understand that they can form a stable government at the Centre only if they give up their policy of *Hindutva* and Mandir-Masjid slogans

The BJP has a chance now which it may not have again The present is a testing time for all parties This is specially time for the BJP which can utilise the opportunity to rise above its concept of *Hindutva* to the need for unifying all patriotic elements *Will it do so?* Let it then declare this *before* the elections and not evade this important issue

The most important question for the people of India today is to have a government that is stable and can enforce law and order, provide internal security, adequate defence against external threats, and raise the 40 per cent of our population living below the poverty line to a reasonable standard of life with adequate opportunities for employment and facilities for health, housing, hygiene and education for all

The New Year way spring many surprises, some pleasant and some not-so-pleasant One hopes 1998 will be better than 1997, for it could not be worse ■

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi, announces a new biannual journal, *Indian Social Science Review,* to be launched in January 1999 in collaboration with SAGE Publications India Private Ltd The principal objective is to bring multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to bear upon the study of social, economic, and political problems of contemporary concern It is proposed to publish articles of a general nature as well as those focused on particular themes There will also be a book review section To ensure high standards, only refereed materials will be included in the journal

The *Review* will be edited by a board consisting of Prof T N Madan (Social Anthropology) as Editor-in-Chief and Professors Amiya K Bagchi (Economic History), Sabyasachi Bhattacharya (History), Ashish Bose (Demography), Suma Chitnis (Education), Sudhir Kakkar (Psychology), Kuldip Mathur (Political Science), Deepak Nayyar (Economics), T.K Oommen (Sociology) and Dr K V Sundaram (Geography) as members

Among the themes that will be addressed in the first few issues of the *Review* are (a) the emergence and erosion of institutions, (b) centre and periphery in economic and political development, and (c) aspects of violence in society

The *Review* invites papers on the above themes as well as articles of a general nature that follow the interdisciplinary approach, to reach the undersigned by April 30, 1998 The length of papers should be between 5000 and 8000 words Shorter communications and research notes may also be considered. A style sheet will be supplied on request

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A People's Manifesto

KRIPA SHANKAR

Basing on the experience of the last fifty years some broad conclusions can be arrived at. No rapid transformation of the country can be made unless the colonial legacy is dismantled first. The colonial agrarian, administrative, judicial and educational systems which were created to serve the foreign rulers cannot but be a drag for the rejuvenation of the country. Land concentration which has resulted in non-optimal utilisation of land and abject poverty for the landless has to be broken to make land distribution more equitable and provide land to the landless. At present roughly 30 million hectares of land is completely unutilised mainly because the landowners have no imperative to till all their land. The same land, if distributed to the landless, will be utilised as the poor have no other option. Such land can be acquired by paying compensation to the owners to make the process smooth. Those who receive land will be willing to repay if the instalments are fairly spread and carry very nominal interest.

The population is annually increasing by 17 million and the labour force by 7.5 million. Employment in the organised sector is rising annually by less than two lakhs. Provision of gainful employment is our biggest challenge. There are many labour intensive productive activities which can take care of this provided adequate investments are made. Two-thirds of the agricultural land is degraded and one-third of water resources goes waste while seventy per cent of the agricultural land remains unirrigated. A massive programme of soil and water conservation, afforestaton, construction of rural roads, godowns, schools, hospitals, etc. can generate not only adequate employment but strengthen the productive base of the economy. In its absence there has occurred not only a depletion of our natural resources but the foodgrains production now has become static leading to a fall in per capita availability of foodgrains.

In the Plans, the outlay on agriculture including allied activities, irrigation, rural employment, etc. has been less than twenty per cent throughout, while agriculture directly supports nearly seventy per cent of the population. This outlay should be substantially raised mainly by raising the direct taxes which are one of the lowest in this country. The black money in the country is nearly half of the GDP and every year black money worth Rs 1,00,000 crores is being generated. Giving concession to the rich in the vain hope that they will make productive investments has not worked. On the other hand it has resulted in the stashing of money in foreign banks and vulgar consumerism.

The author is the Director, Arthik Anusandhan Kendra, Allahabad

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THE greatest harm that the British did to this country was the destruction of the village community organisations which were self-governing units since time immemorial and were the backbone for the stability of our culture. Gandhiji fought all his life for restoration of Gram Swaraj, but the ruling elite in India has betrayed Gandhiji in its narrow self-interest. The need of the hour is to resuscitate these organs of power at the local level and empower them to conduct their affairs. In the urban areas also there should be Ward Committees to look after civic matters.

If power is decentralised to these units not only will it create mass enthusiasm in the developmental process but will also cut down wasteful expenses of the ever proliferating bureaucracy. They can take over the function of the police in a large measure and can dispense quick justice. A beginning can be made by empowering the village panchayats to register First Information Reports instead of the police. In that case the power of the police will be greatly reduced and police force may even become redundant. In all likelihood the panchayats will get settled most of the disputes. China has established People's Mediation Committees all over the country which have proved highly effective in resolving disputes. If it is ordained that all disputes must first go to the village panchayat for conciliation and if the parties fail to arrive at a settlement through the mediation of the panchayats, the latter should pronounce a judgement which should be binding on the parties and there will be no appeal against it except, say, in very rare cases. This will herald a new era for the people.

A soft state cannot deliver the goods. While democracy should be deepened, it does not mean that law-breakers should be treated leniently If laws, howsoever progressive, are not strictly enforced there is no meaning of enacting such laws Many countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh have introduced death penalty for severe crimes We only talk about them

The most neglected section of the society happens to be the daily casual labourer for whom the Minimum Wages Act is a dead letter The minimum wages fixed are lower than what the government spends on prisoners and are nowhere near a living wage ■

United Front and Panchayati Raj : An Assessment

MAHI PAL

The United Front Government, a confederation of 13 political parties, took office on June 1, 1996 headed by H D Deve Gowda, a humble farmer from the South He could govern the country for only 325 days, courtesy the Congress President, the man in a hurry On April 21, 1997, I K Gujral headed the Front with the approval of the Congress-I But this Gujral dispensation too fell in less than a year as the Congress again withdrew its support to it Let us examine what efforts the United Front (UF) has made towards decentralisation, particularly strengthening the Panchayati Raj As the UF was an alliance of national and regional parties which have their own governments in different States, it has become more important to assess the progress made during the UF regime towards this goal

Political Parties' Manifestos and Common Minimum Programme

LET us just glance through what the election manifestos of the different political parties (which have been a part of the government either as a participant or a supporter) and the Common Minimum Programme (CMP) of the UF The Janata Dal Manifesto said

> The Constitution will be amended to define the functions of PRIs with precision and the discretionary powers that the States enjoy in this respect will be curbed In all States, reservation to the OBCs in the elections to PRIs will be made a statutory provision finances commensurate with the functions of the PRIs as provided in the the Constitution by the Centre through the State Governments for development functions will be made available

The Communist Party of India's Manifesto said.

> Tribal majority areas within States should be guaranteed autonomy under the special provisions of the Constitution Scheduled Areas have been excluded from the operation of the Panchayat Acts The present vacuum should be filled by implementing the Bhuria Committee's recommendations so as to give them the right to village self-governance as per democratic customs of the tribal people Real decentralisation should be carried out by conferring more powers and financial resources to elected bodies at district, block and Panchayat levels

According to the Manifesto of the CPI-M, it advocated

> decentralisation of democracy to the grassroots, proper devolution of power to the Panchayats to strengthen the Panchayati Raj Institutions, financial assistance to the Panchayats to flow through State Governments

The All India Indira Congress (Tiwari) was also quite vocal in its Manifesto

> The Indira Congress stands for a meaningful and genuine transfer of powers to the people at grassroots Panchayats as units of basic democracy should be founded on moral principles Gandhian philosophy and Nehruvian thinking should become models for other democratic institutions The Indira Congress shall ensure that money meant for the Panchayats and for rural development programmes actually reaches the people and is properly used

The Congress-I party, which always kept the UF on tenterhooks, spelt out the following in its Election Manifesto

> A silent revolution has taken place in the towns and villages of India Its full impact will be felt in the next few years There are only 4000 MPs and MLAs as representing the people in our political system In a population of 95 crores that was not enough Thirty lakh representatives at the grassroots—one-third of whom are women—will now emerge as leaders of the people

It is clear from the Manifestos of some of the constituents of the UF that they spoke the maximum about decentralisation When the UF assumed power and H D Deve Gowda was made its head, a Common Approach to Major Policy Matters and a Minimum Programme was evolved, and this was released by the then Prime Minister in New Delhi on June 5, 1996 It underscored.

> We pledge to represent the will of the Indian people to strengthen the forces of political federalism which in the Indian context means a strong Centre, strong States and viable local bodies Elections have been held in most States to Panchayats and in some cases also to the Nagarpalikas pursuant to the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution The process will be taken further to ensure devolution of administrative and financial powers to Panchayats and Nagarpalikas in all the States Steps will be taken to ensure that regular elections are held according to the prescribed frequency

Now, let us see what the UF has implemented during its 18 months of rule from the manifestos of its constituents and from the CMP

Deve Gowda Regime's Performance

DURING H D Deve Gowda's regime a conference of Chief Ministers on Basic Minimum Services (BMS) was organised on July 4-5, 1996 The conference endorsed seven BMS, namely, safe drinking water in every habitation, efficient Primary Health Care for every group of 5000 persons, Public Housing Assistance to shelterless poor persons, connecting villages habitations with link roads to the nearest market or main road, nutritional support to children, streamlining the Public Distribution System, and universal and compulsory primary education for providing better quality of life for people specially those living in the rural areas Strengthening the organisation of delivery system and the maintenance of basic services was also one of the agenda items of the conference The conference strongly endorsed the move to reinforce the Panchayati Raj set-up for formulation, planning and execution of the programmes of economic development and social justice These institutions also provide a platform for convergence, integration, prioritisation and coordination of the programmes at their level for ensuring efficient delivery of the services to the people The Gram Sabha by ensuring people's participation entails transparency and accountability of the system

Devolution of adequate powers and functions to the Panchayats was also recommended by the conference States were urged upon to identify specific powers, functions, authority and finance to devolve on the PRIs It also recommended that District Planning Committees (DPCs) should be constituted immediately for strengthening the decentralised process through integration of rural and urban plans in order to provide basic services in a planned and time-bound manner Besides, the issue of reviewing the Centrally sponsored schemes was also debated at the conference

Although in the conference empowerment of the Panchayats was discussed, in the ultimate analysis they have been treated as a mechanism of delivering the BMS to the rural masses and not the institutions of self-government as envisaged in Article 243G of the Constitution If one sees the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution, one finds that all the seven BMS are under the domain of the Panchayats If this is the case, what is the need of having Centrally sponsored schemes for these services? If the UF really wanted to strengthen the Panchayats as pointed out in the Manifestos of the constituent partners, they should have taken the decision of transferring these CSS to the Panchayats The Chief Minister of Madhya pradesh in his speech at the conference rightly observed that these schemes have peripheral focus, varying sharing pattern, unclear availability and allocation of Central assistance They also lessen the discretion of the States to select schemes appropriate to their requirements Hence

> it would be appropriate if the outlays for these schemes in the Central Plan are transferred to the States, keeping in view their size, population of the weaker sections, incidence of poverty related backwardness and disparities in social infrastructure

Actually this would have happened only by transferring the functions from the States downwards—a step towards the Panchayats' empowerment in the real sense But the UF instead of transferring the CSS to the States at the fag end of the 1996-97 financial year has introduced one more CSS, namely, "Ganga Kalyan Yojana" with Budget provisions of Rs 200 crores during 1997-98

Extension of Panchayats in the Scheduled Areas

THE only achievement of the UF Government towards the development of Panchayats was the passing of the Act of Extension of Panchayats to the Scheduled Areas, which got the President's assent on December 24, 1996 This Act extended Part Six of the Constitution to the Scheduled Areas in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Rajasthan This can establish a new socio-economic order in the Scheduled Areas and if implemented effectively would establish a partnership between the State and the tribals.

One of the important features of this Act is that it empowers the Gram Sabha for taking all vital decisions affecting the village economy It would be better if the same provisions are extended to the rest of rural India But the UF did not do so even though it was mentioned in the Janata Dal Manifesto and CMP for clearly defining the functions of the Panchayats

Gujral Regime's Record

DURING the regime of I.K Gujral again a conference of Chief Ministers on Panchayati Raj was organised on August 2, 1997 Although it was a Chief Ministers' conference, only five Chief Ministers and one Deputy Chief Minister came to attend it, the rest were the Panchayat Ministers of the States The conference recommended awarding functional, financial and administrative autonomy to the Panchayats For this purpose, the States were expected to issue executive instructions devolving powers upon the PRIs, specifying functions and demarcating responsibility in unambiguous terms latest by the end of December 1997 Besides, restructuring of the District Rural Development Agency, induction of transparency in the functioning of Panchayats, amending those provisions of the Panchayat Acts which vested the powers of suspension and dismissal in officials and were contrary to the spirit of the 73rd Amendment, and accepting the recommendations of the State Finance Commissions expeditiously were also suggested

One of the important recommendations of the conference was that those Central and State laws which adversely affect the lives of the villagers should be amended Thus, the Centre and States should both review not only such laws but also the rules and regulations which are based on these laws with a view to amending or repealing them It may be mentioned here that in 1994 the Research Foundation, a Calcutta based organisation, found out that 53 Central and State Acts militate against the 29 subjects listed in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution

Thus, except for reviewing allied laws and regulations other recommendations of the conference did not constitute anything new If one studies carefully, more or less the same type of recommendations have been given in all such conferences, and these recommendations have mostly been overlooked by the States because the Centre has also been making inroads in the domain of the Panchayati Raj I K Gujral, who was sermonising the CMs for empowering the Panchayats on August 2, 1997, barely 13 days after August 15 announced that that his government will provide financial assistance to the families to whom a girl child is born if they are living below the poverty line This announcement was converted into a CSS named Balika Samridhi Yojana started on October 2, 1997 with a financial outlay of Rs 1400 crores This went against the spirit of the 73rd Amendment of the Constitution because when the subject of child and women's development has been brought under the domain of the Panchayats as per the eleventh Schedule of the Constitution, the Centre has no right to encroach upon the areas which are constitutionally earmarked for the Panchayats

This not only ran counter to the UF's CMP but also went against the approach evolved for the Ninth Plan by the UF Government The Approach Paper of the Ninth Plan noted

> The result is that during 1995-96 there were 182 CSS with a total outlay of the order of Rs 16,000 crores Many of these schemes relate to subjects falling squarely within the competence of the State Governments In principle Centrally Sponsored Schemes should be confined to schemes of an inter-State character, matters impinging on national security, select national priorities where Central supervision is essential for effective implementations and multi-State externally financed projects where Central cooperation is necessary for operational reasons Except for such schemes, all other schemes should be transferred to States alongwith corresponding funds

Has the launching of such schemes like the Balika Samridhi Yojana not struck at the root of the approach delineated in the Ninth Plan Approach Paper? Have the steps taken by the UF Government during its 18 months of governance advanced the principles of political, administrative and economic federalism for ushering in an era of cooperative federalism which the Approach Paper of the Ninth Plan underlined?

Conclusion

WHEN the UF Government came to power as a combination of 13 parties, it was thought that it would strengthen grassroots democracy But except for extension of the 73rd Amendment to the Fifth Scheduled Area nothing worthwhile has been done by this government for the Panchayats It seems the Manifestos, programmes and agenda put before the people during the elections had no relevance What is relevant nowadays is only expediency ■

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GOLDEN JUBILEE YEAR OF INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE

Massification of Electoral Democracy and Political Fluidity

PRADEEP KUMAR

The declaration of mid-term poll to the Lok Sabha in the golden jubilee year of our independence does not necessarily make us proud of our democracy. While we may continue to harp on themes like "India being the largest democracy of the world", there is enough pessimism and dismay regarding the performance of our democratic institutions. If one goes by the "drawing-room discussions" and "Letters to the Editor" columns in most newspapers, English and vernacular included, our middle class is sufficiently apathetic to the political upheavals that ironically continue to be reported by the press in meticulous details. Often one comes across people talking about "criminalisation of politics", "illiterate, unruly and uneducated masses' entry into the political arena", "lack of discipline among the political leaders of almost all parties", "fragmentation of national parties and the consequent emergence of small regional and even local outfits overshadowing the hitherto dominant pan-Indian political formations" and, above all, "casteisation and deideologisation" of our polity. This is often contrasted with Nehru's Congress when the supposedly party system was "neat" and "clean", and the issues of caste, ethnicity and religion were not allowed to be projected in as crude and transparent a manner as it is done today. Added to this pessimistic and dismal scenario are the issues of corruption, defection, favouritism and vote-banks which need no emphasis here. "Hung Parliament" is the latest entry in this category.

The question in a nutshell is: have we actually strayed away from the path laid down by the stalwarts of the early years of our independence? Has democracy in fact been derailed or even turned turtle? All this may not be very easy to answer but surely one can take stock of the situation in a manner which could be a little more dispassionate.

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THE greatest achievement of the last five decades of the independence has been the "electoral socialism" of our system of periodic elections based on adult franchise. By this variety of "socialism" we mean the equal opportunity to nearly all castes/classes/sections of our society to participate in the electoral politics. This has not happened just in one go but has taken several decades. While the Indian Constitution provided for it, the process of percolation of democracy (in electoral and not philosophical terms) took time to reach the grassroots level. This was but natural in a society where only the top layer (creamy layer?) had been fortunate enough to be educationally and economically forward to meaningfully participate in the electoral exercise in the initial years of the Republic. Let us not forget that no amount of legal provisions inserted in a Constitution can ever make democracy work unless and until the politics itself is democratised. And this obviously takes time.

Not that we have evolved a culture that can be called truly democratic. We have not even learnt to know so many conventions that go with the working of democratic institutions in the West, but then the electoral aspect of democracy has been strengthened over the years. Not only are elections held at regular intervals (and even earlier than scheduled), the participation is truly massive, both in terms of voters' turnout (which is constantly on the rise), as well as the "autonomous" nature of the act of voting. Not that there are no musclemen to capture booths, but the total incidents of rigging and booth capturing do not substantially alter the outcome of elections. Despite some areas having acquired notoriety in this sphere, they remain marginal to the total electoral exercise.

More important than the administration of the electoral process, has been the gradual spread of political awakening among various strata of our electorate. No longer one hears of the Dalits, the women, the backward castes and the minorities voting on behalf of their political "mentors". More than intimidation (which has largely ceased to be a crucial factor, thanks to the sectarian leaders who make a hue and cry even at the slightest possibility

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of such an occurrence), the act of voting was particularly vitiated in the early decades of independence by the lack of training of the massive electorate in the democratic institutions Let us remember, democracy is also a process of learning, and it is only through repeated exercises in voting that the people can actually learn to vote. It is important to remember here that this "learning" is not even remotely connected with academic learning in any manner. What matters, and should indeed matter, in an election is the quality of "representativeness" of a candidate. In other words, it is the capacity (or lack of it) to represent the majority of the electorate, that is the criterion of election in a representative democracy. And it is in this respect that more and more voters are actually exercising their choice to vote for a person in whom they have greater faith.

It is immaterial whether the candidate is illiterate, or highly educated It is quite possible that a candidate whom the voters choose may not fit into the framework of an "ideal" legislator; but then this conception of an ideal politician itself is problematic Often most of our educated discussants have the Western democracies as their reference points What happens in their legislatures becomes a standard for us, and any deviation from their "neat" and "clean" politics becomes a matter of "shame" for our intellectuals

The problem arises when a comparison is drawn between the political institutions in the West and those prevalent in India While centuries of rapid industrialisation there has bulldozed the social and economic diversities in their societies to a great extent, these diversities not only exist in plenty in a truly plural society of India, but of late have been politicised to the fullest possible extent Absence of the levelling impact of industrialisation (in view of the lack of industrial development) has created a situation where even the smallest of these groups (say, caste) have taken to the political process as the shortest route to their empowerment This has led to what Rajni Kothari earlier termed as politicisation of caste more than casteisation of politics

No doubt political empowerment does not mean the same as economic or even social empowerment but then it is true that while economic and social empowerment may take decades, political empowerment is something which an electoral democracy can promise instantly However, it is not all that meaningless either In fact political empowerment is a route to the other varieties of empowerment It is only in terms of their political empowerment, for example, that the backwards and the Dalits (SCs) have gained the maximum in the last few decades In case of the Dalits, this empowerment is totally disproportionate to their economic or social empowerment, and is solely the outcome of electoral democracy There was absolutely no other way these lowest castes could ever have mattered to the powerful Indian state From being the captive vote-banks of the upper castes, these castes have gradually moved from being at the tail ends of the national parties, to their own political outfits, the BSP being the most recent and also the most important of them all.

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WHAT goes by the name of vote-banks today is not the same captive vote-banks that existed in the fifties and the sixties Today this much-maligned term means nothing less than the total tactical and skilled voting by a group of voters In an electoral system, it is the cluster voting that actually counts What is wrong if a group of people, otherwise marginalised in socio-economic terms, enjoys an hour of political glory where it dictates terms, more powerfully than the educated and economically well-off sections of the society? This hour of glory, even if illusory and temporary to a great extent, remains the only route to snatch a bit (howsoever small) of the national cake, to which these people would never have had any access. It is this realisation that has made the 'Dalit' a political, more than a social, category in UP today

Myron Weiner had termed India's politics of the sixties as the "politics of scarcity", thereby explaining the working of our caste/community regional pressure groups in terms of the culture of scarcity that prevailed in India It is this politics of survival in conditions of scarcity where squabbles for the small size of the national cake make most groups acutely competitive, that differentiates our polity from the West The latter has experienced democratic institutions in the politics of affluence and plenty which has given a neat and sophisticated look to these institutions there Democracy was a latecomer in these countries and in fact came after industrial development had created enough resources for enough people. Even then it came in stages, unlike in our country where adult franchise, women's right to vote, eradication of untouchability, politicisation of masses —all came simultaneously and in one go Obviously we could not have waited to replicate the Western experience It is in this background that we should make an assessment of our democratic institutions Much that seemed 'sophisticated', 'dignified' and 'cultured' behaviour of our political representatives in the Nehruvian era, was actually an indication of marginal democratisation of our polity; where like West, there was plenty to share in view of the smaller number of claimants

Much talk of political apathy today is actually confined to the urban educated middle classes, and one has only to make a visit to some rural areas or even a slum on the outskirts of a city to see for oneself the enthusiasm of the voters Most people in these areas would seem to have made up their minds for their candidates even as their urban well-off counterparts are struggling to shrug off their reluctance to vote for the "never-changing perpetually-corrupt" politicians It is indeed the constant marginalisation of this class at least at the time of periodic elections, that accounts for their pessimism There is enough evidence today to show that it is the relative political irrelevance of this upper middle class (compared to the semi-literate masses) that has made them political apathetics Their clout in administration and top echelons of political decision-making the makes electoral politics rather a nuisance for them It is indeed these who are opting out of the political system, and these are again the kind of people who are not tired of suggesting that India needs a dictator today The "subalterns" luckily have yet to develop this apathy for the democratic system, and that is perhaps why a majority of them continue to say "no" to any proposal of dictatorship replacing the "failed" democratic institutions

A nationwide survey conducted by a team which included this author (under the auspices of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi) only one-and-a-half years ago revealed the following facts among others 59 per cent voters in 1996 believed that their vote made a difference, and as many as 69 per cent said "no" to the question that governance was better without parties and elections The opposition to the democratic system in India is weaker among the deprived groups and stronger among the privileged sections of society—urban, educated, upper caste, rich Muslims and the Scheduled Tribes were the only marginalised groups whose participation was below the national average Interestingly the upper caste, urban graduates had a below national average turnout in the 1996 elections as against the very poor, illiterate, Dalit, OBC, ruralites whose turnout was above the national average

This trend of greater political participation of the otherwise "marginalised" sections of our society may be a good omen for our democracy in view of the opposite trend that is discernible in the West (say, the USA) There are others, however, who have somehow failed to go beyond the "take-off" stage The Scheduled Tribes are one such category In States like Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan where they constitute a sizeable percentage of the population (not considering the tribal majority States of the North-East), no particular party has been able to mobilise them Consequently the party identification is weak and anything like a BSP is clearly missing which could bring the Adivasis on the main agenda as the BSP has done in UP about the Dalits. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the "mainland" politics we never had a tribal Chief Minister in his own right *a la* Mayawati

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RELATED to the issue of massificaiton of our electoral democracy is the problem of political fluidity, resulting in "hung Parliaments" In my childhood days I used to worry about the possibility of no party gaining a majority in the Lok Sabha Often I wondered why was it that the people always assumed that one or the other party (invariably the Congress) would gain an absolute majority I was, however, told by the elders that my question was as frivolous as asking what if there were no students in a school, or what if people did not fall sick and the hospitals remained empty of them In other words, the possibility of my apprehension coming true was as little as that of people not falling sick This was but natural at a time when most of us had got so much acclimatised to the Congress dominance that all that seemed possible was either continued Congress rule or its eventual replacement in the distant future by some equally dominant party that would mark India's entry into a two-party system In a way many of our intellectuals continued regretting the absence of a "neat" two-party system in India After all we had it in the UK, in the USA and even in some other developed countries of the world It was yet another colonial hangover that made us feel ashamed of our indigenous problems

Now that the Congress system has completely broken down, we are faced with a problem that is peculiar to a truly diverse society where the arrested industrialisation has failed to bulldoze the social and economic unevenness The "electoral socialism" which helped all sections of the society getting politicised at the fastest possible pace, sharpened these diversities further and made them more and more articulate to demand their share in the national cake, which had failed to grow in size in the wake of the population explosion and non-investment in the employment generating sectors

In fact while the Western societies were compelled to read obituaries to ideology, history and every other thing ("End of Ideology" and "End of History" debates), we in India were still grappling with the more fundamental problems of survival. To us the entire Western discourse was irrelevant in view of our being far away from any societal "consensus" which had made the West believe that the fundamental issues in their society were settled for good.

As long as the politicisation of the electorate remained confined to some upper echelons of the society, and the rest of it remained content with playing the supportive role, the one-party dominant system (Congress dominance) could very well manage the differences The party very ably devised the control and coordination mechanism which resolved the inter-community (inter-caste) differences without much public acrimony Even though the Congress remained essentially a loose coalition of its regional units which in turn themselves were the loose coalitions of the local castes and sub-castes, the limited politicisation of the electorate made this manageable within the Congress system

The breakdown of this Congress system has brought the conflict-resolving mechanism to a halt and the increasing politicisation of various caste/sub-caste groups has further created a situation where each of these castes has opted for a separate political outfit

So much so that in a State like UP (which is representative of the nations politics in more ways than one) each political party has found its own caste constituency If the Yadavs and the Muslims overwhelmingly support the Samajwadi Party (SP), the lower OBCs and Jats favour the BJP alongwith a large section of the upper castes A small percentage of these upper castes has also been traditionally voting for the Congress party which till the rise of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) had the monopoly of the lower caste (Dalit) votes Even though this casteisation of politics began much earlier (Charan Singh's exit from the Congress in 1967 symbolised it in UP), it was never so complete as it is today This incidentally accounts for the near "freezing" of votes of all permutations and combinations in UP which is revealed in the electoral outcome of the 1993 and 1996 Vidhan Sabha elections where all parties secured almost the same share of votes in both the elections BJP 177/174, Samajwadi Party 109/110, BSP 67/67, Congress 28/33 The increasing share of the total regional vote in the country (which has gone up from nine per cent in 1989 to 21 per cent in 1996) actually points to the expanding social revolution more than to any regionalisation of the polity

The market theory of democracy suggests that while the political parties may not be ideologically oriented, they do act as shopkeepers who keep not one but several categories of customers in mind This makes them stock a variety of goods to cater to their varying needs This is even when they target a particular category of customers and *primarily* cater to their requirements only This is essential to ensure that no potential customers are lost by the shopkeeper's insistence on exclusivism

However, the political parties today are resembling more and more the wholesale dealers who have everything for some but nothing for other, a stage has come when in the absence of a "departmental store" catering to general items the customers (voters) find themselves greatly circumscribed in their choice Obviously they alone are not to be blamed for this but then they can surely pressurise their shopkeepers (political parties) to expand their clientele by going beyond their immediate customers The need to woo the "friendly" customers on the borderline is very much urgent, and only that party will succeed which does this more successfully than others—call this coalition politics or politics of opportunism, depending on your own ideological predilections In the absence of such an attempt at broadening the base by coalescing of different social groups (either within a party or between the parties) we may end up with yet another *Trishanku* Lok Sabha after the fresh elections

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In short, what has happened in the journey of fifty years of our electoral democracy is the dissipation of "power" in a highly heterogeneous/plural, diverse and uneven society It seems, the earlier protagonists of the democratic system who are not tired of shedding tears over the "failure" of these institutions in India, had visualised only the trajectory followed in the West They had somehow not anticipated the massification of politics and the resultant "chaos" It seems these supporters of democracy came largely from the upper and middle sections (caste/class included) of the society and allowed themselves to believe that democracy would mean transfer of power to them from the erstwhile masters, and politics will revolve around them arousing only intra-elite conflicts This implied that the logic of democratic pressure will somehow stop short of going against their own political interests

This, however, does not mean that all is well with the running of these institutions Casteisation is not necessarily a phenomenon to be eulogised But then the political institutions have not undergone as serious a transformation (read deterioration) as some columnists would have us believe With greater public awareness, media investigation and diminishing

(Continued on page 30)

We Will Survive All the Current Trials and Unfold a New Society

Mira Markovic on Yugoslavia, the World and the Left

Mira Markovic, a leading figure of the Yugoslav United Left, was in New Delhi last October [for the release of the Tamil edition of her book Night and Day A Diary (December 1992-July 1994) *whose English translation came out in India in 1996] when Sumit Chakravartty met her and placed a set of questions to her for an interview She has now replied in writing The following is the interview she has given to* Mainstream *covering several issues and subjects of interest and concern to her*

Ques In one of your diary-notings (dated May 28, 1993) you observed

> I have always thought that if those who had taken the decisions about the former Yugoslavia had been more competent and especially if they had had greater integrity, we would have been able to save Yugoslavia, we would have reconciled the state and society, and we would have had both flour and antibiotics As things turned out—the country's fate was in the wrong hands

Would you kindly elaborate? Specifically do you feel that disintegration of Yugoslavia was rooted in the past—in the policies laid down by Josip Broz Tito himself, or do you attribute the development to the incapacity of the post-Tito leadership to handle the complexities of running such a multinational state as Yugoslavia? (This question has considerable relevance for India which too is a multinational country and there is no dearth of forces, both internal and external, working for its disintegration)

Ans The Yugoslavia which was formed after the Second World War, and which was headed by Tito was a very stable state and social community, despite the fact that it was very multiethnic, despite the fact that during the Second World War a kind of civil war was waged, a war between members of the nations that lived in the former Yugoslavia and despite the fact that after the War it was materially very much destroyed

That stability, by and large, came from respect for the principles of equality of the nations, that was in former Yugoslavia considered almost a sacred principle President Tito himself treated that principle of equality among the Yugoslav nations almost as a cult My generation—although born during the War and immediately after the War—and the generation of my children, grew up in a country in which the most sacred was man, regardless of his national, ethnic and religious origins

After Tito's death in 1980, for more than a decade, almost for 12 years, Yugoslavia was headed by a collective body, the so-called Presidency, that consisted of representatives from the Yugoslav republics (Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia) and from the representatives of two provinces (Vojvodina and Kosovo) The Presidency was headed, every year, by one of the eight and his mandate lasted for a year

A year was not enough for a man, who has that time to his disposal, to do anything thoughtful and serious I presume that in the first half of the year the head (who lasted only a year) was trying to manage himself, and in the second half he was already contemplating about his departure The only thing that could realistically be done was related to the effort for each of them that during that short period of time they do something for their republic and for their nation

During those twelve years twelve chiefs were changed and I think that there is no Yugoslav who is able to give out their names The only one that by all means every Yugoslav shall remember is the Croatian representative from 1991 who, when it was his turn to take office, said that he would be the last President of Yugoslavia And he was He did not wait until the end of his term A few months after his departure, with his personal efforts Yugoslavia, one of the most beautiful and one of the most nobly imagined countries in the world, broke up

The concept of its leadership and the functioning of that leadership between 1980 and 1991 was a huge reason for its destabilisation That destabilisation, however, was not crucial in the later disintegration of Yugoslavia Yugoslavia broke up in 1991 under the influence of external and internal factors which were mutually connected and very much complementary

The external factors, in fact, were pressures that came from the centres of political power outside Yugoslavia, and the break-up of the country suited them (as well as the destabilisation of East European countries) due to many economic, geostrategic and political reasons

The internal factor was resurgerence of nationalist chauvinism in all the Yugoslav republics That nationalism began to emerge in the years described after Tito's death Separatism overgrowing that nationalism was prompted by the financial, political and psychological centres of power outside Yugoslavia They fed hatred of Yugoslavia within Yugoslavia Nationalistic hatred doesn't need much food To grow up to monstrous proportions it needs just a little Nationalism is a genie, that, when it comes out from the bottle, never returns to the bottle That is why it should be kept in an iron bottle, not in a glass one Those outside the country planning its break-up, chose its weak spot its ethnic diversity

The break-up of Yugoslavia was brought about in a large measure also by the political immigrants from all the republics of former Yugoslavia and from all the peoples that lived in former Yugoslavia, who as anti-Yugoslavs and nationalists emigrated from Yugoslavia after the Second World War and were filled with the most horrible hatred towards Yugoslavia and socialism At the beginning of the nineties they found in the crisis of Yugoslavia the ground and opportunity to realise their hatred, and their long awaited revenge The political immigrants from all the Yugoslav peoples, many of whom were financially and economically influential in their communities, are responsible for pouring more oil on the flames in which perished a beautiful, modern and successful country, much respected by the whole world

The structure of these external and internal pressures decapitated Yugoslavia I would like to say that in the hierarchy of those pressures I place the internal pressure on a higher pedestal Had the Yugoslav peoples found the strength within themselves to preserve the brotherhood and unity of their country, it would have been very difficult for it to break up Or it would have broken up anyway, but without a war

As any other community, the society crucially depends on its internal stability For society, as well as the family, it goes without saying, cannot be broken up from outside if it is from the inside harmonious and determined to defend itself Of course, account should be taken of the fact that the reasons for the break up of Yugoslavia lay within the corpus of the great and dramatic changes which took place in Eastern Europe, all of the countries of former socialism and the greatest and the first amongst them, the Soviet Union

All these countries were exposed to strong external pressures directed at their internal destruction—economic, political and cultural, even territorial, in cases where those countries were multiethnic (Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia) Those external pressures were facilitated by internal hardships that were experienced by all those countries over a long period—slowdown in economic development, high degree of centralisation in the State, identifying the Party with the State, cultural inhibition and isolation

The fact that former Yugoslavia shared the fate with the rest of this part of the world, Eastern Europe, to which it never belonged either ideologically or politically, remains unexplained and in logical terms is unclear, as it is a great historic injustice Since the Second World War Yugoslavia was formed and developed as a dynamic, modern and ambitious society that was as such highly respected in the world—both in the West and in the East

Yugoslavia was different and more successful compared to all the other former socialist countries in Eastern Europe But in the showdown that the West had with them, Yugoslavia came out the worst off May be because Yugoslavia was the most successful, the most modern socialist country in the world and in its time, may be because it was the answer to many dilemmas connected with socialism that came out from socialist reality in East Europe Yugoslavia was a successful socialist society and it was punished as an example for that

Ques You have—in the face of the heaviest of odds and at the risk of being thoroughly isolated in the wake of the nationalist upsurge—stood firm in highlighting the need to return to Yugoslav consciousness discarding the purely "Serbian" approach bordering on chauvinism Do you really feel it possible to return to that consciousness or is it pure utopia? Is it also possible to restore Yugoslavia not in its old form but in the form of a loose confederation of the former republics in the foreseeable or distant future?

Ans I was back then as I am now convinced that Yugoslavia represents the best solution for all the South-Slavic nations and for all the other nations that used to live in those territories

With the break-up of Yugoslavia all former Yugoslav peoples turned into losers All countries formed in the territory of former Yugoslavia are countries without sovereignty or with limited sovereignty Foreign powers and the international community interfere in their internal affairs in varying degrees and in various forms And all these States have experienced obvious material and spiritual degradation

I strongly believe in the concept of integration

Regardless of the storm raging over this part of the world, I am confident that not only the South-Slavic, but also the Balkan nations, shall at the end try to find the way to live together, in some kind of community, union, confederation, or some other form of living together Only life together will protect them from conflicts over history and territories that last for centuries, and that shall last for a thousand years or more unless a stop is put with some way of living together To be precise—the Balkan nations can hope for peace and prosperity only if they find a form of life together After all, that form of life together Europe is searching too Even in Europe progressive and educated people aspire to a Europe as community of nations

Ahead of us is an era of connecting peoples, of eliminating borders An era of universality is coming Unless a nuclear, natural or environmental catastrophe happens, Planet Earth shall be our homeland

My mondialism today is not, by all means, widespread, the majority among the new and radical ideas have not been widely supported in public and they seemed like Utopia

But most of Utopia, or at least most of them, have become a reality

Ques The former Yugoslav republics parting company with one another was not, after all, such a surprising spectacle given Yugoslavia's history in this century But what really pained and shocked us was the scale of bloodbath that accompanied the disintegration of the country Was that not a slur on socialism as well precisely because the peoples of the republics were supposedly living in harmony for so many years in a socialist society? And how do you explain this bloodbath when yours was not a replica of the so-called socialist states of Eastern Europe which practised different variants of Stalinist Bolshevism imported from the USSR? You were accused of revisionism by the Stalinist Left and yet such a bloodbath took place in your country Does that mean that the socialism you practised also had its flaws such that you could not evolve effective instruments to successfully resist and thwart the national-chauvinist upsurge?

Ans Yugoslav socialism, which was created from the Second World War upto the break-up of Yugoslavia in the early nineties, constituted a society which tried to be progressive, humane and modern And it has succeeded in most part

I think that former Yugoslavia was more successful than the other socialist countries One of the strongest points of that society was its striving for equality of peoples Yugoslavia was, when the national issue is the matter, arranged in such a way as Europe will one day be arranged

This is only logical, because if anywhere different peoples can live equally, than it is in the socialist society, that is in a society where the primal principle is equality

The fact that this principle has not been fully achieved in a socialist society does not mean that the society is not a socialist one or that it is impossible to achieve that in a socialist system, but that means that a socialist society like a new social system, cannot achieve all its goals and ideas at once It is particularly difficult to achieve those goals that are in conflict with great economic, political and other interests

In any case, due to lack of socialism in its historical beginning the idea of socialism, a wealthy and just system as a whole, should not be called into question

Although, I must say, Yugoslavia did not break up in the socialist system but in a system which was introduced after socialism had been abolished

Ques Why is it that after so many years of socialist rule the Communists in Yugoslavia enjoy such limited support as is reflected in their electoral strength (and which you have written about in your book)?

Ans The Communists of present-day Yugoslavia like the Communists in all countries of the former socialist system, have been completely marginalised That marginalisation is the consequence of a strong anti-Communist—and as a whole, anti-Leftist—spirit that conquered Europe and this part of the world at the beginning of 1990s In front of that anti-Leftist advance the Communists stood completely powerless That lack of power has many reasons For instance, they were not ready for that kind of unreasonable, sudden and strong blow They were convinced that they represent noble and superior ideas and that they are invincible And they did not expect even a mild blow, let alone a deadly one, from the side that functioned on the principles of inequality, hierarchy and lack of freedom Simply, and quite naturally, they did not believe that the old world shall defeat the new one With due reason, they were not afraid of anti-history And it was anti-history that happened At least at this point of time conservatism played better than progress Of course, in their confidence in the historical and civilisational superiority of their outlook on the world, many among the Communists had become complacent And they behaved so complacently as if civilisational and historical superiority shall be established out of the blue

And of course, there are known cases Many among them, among the Communists, were not

Communists at all. They only belonged to the Communist Party because it was the only party in their societies and anyone who wanted to be politically active could be only in that one place and nowhere else These unconvinced members of the Communist Parties were the first to leave when the troubled days came We all knew even earlier that there are those people, but only during the hard times we realised that there are many of them, it seems too many Those self-serving people in the early 1990s created the grotesque stampede from the political Left to the Right, which marked the close of this century and puzzled and amazed many Leftists who were progressive people, but people who were not known for their courage Inertia, a self-serving attitude and cowardice were largely to blame for the collapse of the Communist Parties in the countries of Eastern Europe at the end of the twentieth century

Of course, in due course in those countries the Left shall renew itself, but as a new one New for its ideas, new for its shape of organisation, and new for its different representatives

But that is another and great subject and I am not opening it, because you did not ask about it

Ques In all the former socialist states of Eastern Europe and Russia lack of democracy leading to lack of transparency and accountability of the leadership was a vital factor that facilitated the collapse of the state structures and the social system in vogue This brings us to the question of blending socialism with allround democracy and not allowing socialism to be distorted by depriving it of its democratic essence in the name of 'dictatorship of the party and its leadership' in the absence of accountability of those in office While theoretically socialism is regarded as the highest form of democracy according to Marxist-Leninist precepts, in practice there is paucity of real democracy under socialism despite the social security of the citizens that socialism ensures Is it possible to guarantee such democracy under socialism so as to preclude the tyranny of the secret police in the name of defending socialism?

Ans Democracy, as the rule of the majority or as a rule of the people, what that word means in translation, is possible only in a society that is based on the principle of equality of all the people and freedom for every man So that means in a socialist society A society that is not democratic cannot be socialist And vice versa A society that is not socialist cannot be democratic That is, a society that has the rule of inequality, where there is hierarchy, social and political, which is divided into rich and poor, into powerful and powerless, rules out democracy

The sham of elections to which everybody can go, is only the dust for the eyes of the naive and gullible people Once in every four years, or more frequently or less frequently, never mind, citizens choose someone that allegedly represents their interests or is supposed to do so

No one, not even the best among them, cannot or should not represent the interests of other people One's interests are best represented directly, without any middleman

A democratic society shall be one in which everyone shall have its part in decision-making which is of interest to the society when one is living his or her life in that society Such a society has not became a reality anywhere yet It is a matter of future with the premise of high standard of living and cultural development

Ques In your diary-noting of October 11, 1993, you wrote

> The only hope for all the former socialist countries is to create a 'new society', shaped according to the positive ideas and accomplishments of bourgeois society, as well as according to those of socialist society Neither of these two types of societies is all good or all bad All the good points of the two types of society should be combined in a blueprint for a new society, just as everything that was not positive in them should be jettisoned

While calling for a 'new world' blending the two social systems you also observed in the same noting

> The old world can never return, not because it was not good but simply because it is old

How far would the ingredients of this 'new world' differ from the contents of the mixed economic framework developed on the capitalist foundation in India under the inspiration of Jawaharlal Nehru whose 'socialistic pattern of society' did have the objective of a welfare state that would bring about growth with social justice (which strategy vested interests linked to the World Bank and IMF and holding some of the key levers of state power are today seeking to abandon through reckless privatisation and systematic destruction of the public sector on the alibi of carrying out economic reforms)? How would the 'new world' you have in view contrast with whatever Deng Xiaoping had tried and Jiang Zemin is trying to build in contemporary China under the slogan of modernisation of the country?

Ans I am convinced that before us is an age in which a new society will be created, a society based on the best traditions of uptodate socialism and uptodate capitalism

As far as socialism is concerned, its best tradition is the notion and the experience of equality As far as capitalism is concerned, its best tradition is the cult of material development Those two traditions—

equality and material development—combined together, could be a basis for establishing a new society which would perhaps have a new name But it is also possible that it will retain some of the names known so far

The second half of this century has seen more or less considered and organised efforts towards that end in various parts of the world I believe that Nehru's concept of India's development was inspired by that vision of a possible society I also believe that the China of today has successfully struck a balance between its past socialist experience and the experience of present-day capitalism and has achieved an impressive economic growth based on the balance while not compromising the principle of fairness as its main principle There will be other variants of the combination of the two experiences—capitalist and socialist These are still early days in that respect I believe that mankind will be wise enough and patient enough to survive all the trials of this initial stage

Ques Your diary-notings cover the period December 1992-January 1994 I would like to know from you about the present situation in Yugoslavia following the lifting of sanctions and cessation of hostilities, and the current state of the Yugoslav Left

Ans The book that was translated in India into English (in 1996) and in Tamil (in 1997) and which represents my political and somewhat personal diary, deals with the period between 1992 and 1994 and is called *Night and Day* But I have continued to write and last year the second part of my diaries covering the period between 1994 and 1996 was published under the title *Between East and South* I went on writing

In regard to the current situation in Yugoslavia it is marked by the efforts to overcome the consequences of the hardships Yugoslavia went through in a very short period of time In 1990 it changed its social system In 1991 Yugoslavia broke up In 1991 the war started on its former territory, first in Croatia and then in Bosnia and Herzegovina In 1992 the international community imposed sanctions against new Yugoslavia In the meantime new Yugoslavia received about one million refugees

Each of this traumas is enough to jeopardise the integrity and stability of a community and a person for a longer period, and we had to deal with all of those traumas at once

Now Yugoslavia is gradually recovering from all the shocks A period of material and spiritual renewal of the society is in front of us Yugoslavia would carry out that renewal rapidly and successfully if it were not still the object of interests of all those centres of political power which I have mentioned at the outset and said that they were responsible for the break-up of Yugoslavia These interests are reflected in the financial, political and diplomatic pressures on Yugoslavia and in the financial and political support of their subsidiaries in Yugoslavia personified by some Opposition Right-wing parties These Right-wing parties are in fact only quisling offices the heads of which go each month, or maybe more often, to be briefed by their bosses and patrons outside Yugoslavia

In spite of all that, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has the most stable economic and social situation in Eastern Europe where there were no break up of countries, no wars, no sanctions and no refugees According to the latest figures, Yugoslavia has the highest rate of growth in Europe, it has no inflation and is making every possible effort to retain free health and education, as was the case during socialism At the same time the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia establishes contacts with its neighbours and the world—economic, political and cultural relations—on equal terms and in an active manner,

As far as the Yugoslav Left is concerned, it was established in 1994 out of 23 smaller Left-wing parties Already in the first year of its existence, the number of members who individually joined was several times that of members who joined collectively

The. Yugoslav Left is the only Yugoslav party, all the other parties in Yugoslavia are within the republics, they operate in Serbia and in Montenegro

The Yugoslav Left was created with the aim of being a new Left It is new primarily by its theoretical premise in a way that it makes its basis on any idea of freedom existing in philosophy, science, art and religion, regardless of when or where those ideas emerged In other worlds, it regards as its theoretical premises any idea and any experience freeing the individual out of poverty, exploitation, ignorance and hierarchy irrespective of the time and source of the idea and experience

Furthermore, the Yugoslav Left is new also in the way it is set up It is a movement, not a party, believing in the future of the Left through unity with movements which will absorb the political parties that have so far divided the Left and caused tension and friction on the Left

The Yugoslav Left participated for the first time in elections for the Assembly of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia as a coalition with the ruling Serbian Socialist Party and the New Democracy party That electoral coalition won most seats in the Parliament in those elections and formed a government

The same coalition recently participated in elections for the Republic's Parliament and again captured most seats

The Yugoslav Left, whether theoretically, politically or with its organisation, is in anticipation of a future Left, and not of course, only in Yugoslavia

Ques. How do you view the role of the NATO in the Yugoslav crisis? What is your attitude to the NATO's eastward drive which even the former Communists in power in some of the East European countries (as, for example, Poland) have wholeheartedly supported on the ground that it could provide stability to the region by acting as a deterrent to a possible Russian expansion in future?

Ans As for the NATO presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is in accordance with the Dayton Peace Agreement and has played a positive role thus far Time will tell how things will develop in the future I hope that everybody will continue to comply with the Peace Agreement, including the NATO

Regarding the NATO's expansion to the East, I believe that enlargement of military alliances, and the NATO as well, should not have a future Such a future will not be in the interests of most countries in the world

In my view, a world free from military alliances and confrontation, a world of cooperation and perhaps of ultimate and well-deserved peace should be the future of our planet

Ques It was distressing to find that despite India being one of the founders of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), neither India individually nor the NAM collectively raised its voice against the disintegration of Yugoslavia even though the latter also happened to be one of the founders of the movement and was in fact chairing the NAM when its balkanisation began But on the other hand Yugoslavia too, due to the exigencies of 'realpolitic', did not seek any assistance from the NAM and instead sought help from other bodies like the UN and the European Union in this regard Didn't all this expose the inefficacy and impotence of the NAM? What then is your attitude to the NAM? Does it have a future in the post-Cold War world? What does Yugoslavia in its prevailing condition expect from the NAM?

Ans The Movement of Non-Aligned Countries has reaffirmed the right of the national member-states to decide on their own fate In the case of the Yugoslav crisis, the Movement was not of much assistance, just as the United Nations were not able to resist the interests of the powers which fuelled the Yugoslav crisis Aware of that, Yugoslavia did not turn to the Movement for assistance, even though it was one of its founders and although the principle of preservation of freedom and independence of small nations is one of the main principles of the Movement

This, however, should not be the reason for giving up the fight for the rights of nations and countries freely to decide their own fate and to develop among them relations of active peaceful cooperation based on equality On the contrary, the Movement and its aspirations are today the only democratic and liberating alternative to the policy of force and hegemony in each country where they exist to a greater or lesser extent Sure, the future is on the side of the ideas on which this Movement is based

Ques You have visited India several times What are your impressions of this country and its people? How do you assess India's role in your current travails?

Ans India has made a very strong impression on me I do not say this out of courtesy Quite the opposite

I say this because I believe that India is immensely rich in people and territory which it has not fully utilised That vast territory and so many people have not been made to serve the purposes of improving the quality of life, either of the individual or the community as a whole Nor has India taken its rightful place in the international community

I trust that India will find the way to take advantage of its territory and population and to become one of the crucial factors in international developments throughout the contemporary world economically, politically and culturally

I was most impressed by the tolerance that exist between members of various peoples and religions That tolerance could serve as an example to all similar countries Such a degree of tolerance is rare to find even in one-nation states or among members of the same religion Such tolerance is simply nowhere to be found This is the most beautiful face of India

My impressions of India, from my recent trip, I have published in the latest edition of my diary and I am sending you those diaries, as a memento

Ques Have you had any interaction with the Left—of the Stalinist, dogmatic, doctrinaire Marxist variety on the one side, and of the genuinely democratic socialist, non-Marxist or creative non-dogmatic Marxist variant on the other—in India? If so, what impressions do you have of them? What message do you have for the Indian Left in general?

Ans I have had no contacts with the leadership of any Left-wing party in India That is why I find it difficult to send a message that would be based upon my impressions and contact with the Indian Left

Therefore, I can send only one message of principle Considering what it had to go through since its first appearance on the political scene, the Left should be united, it should act as unified movement irrespective of the differences of opinion in the Left, and other goals which frequently and tragically divide it, cause infighting and take its energy away from efforts to defeat the conservative and inhuman world which the Left has a historical task to abolish

That is a difficult, but possible, road for the Left Only a united Left, not only in one country, but in the world, can change the world, make it a happy place for everyone to live in

Give my regards to India ■

BLUE PENCIL

Faiz's Editorial on Gandhiji's Assassination

G S. BHARGAVA

Over thirty years ago as a correspondent stationed in Rawalpindi—Islamabad had not been built then—I had first heard of Faiz Ahmed Faiz's editorial in the *Pakistan Times* on the assassination of Gandhiji My Pakistani colleagues pressed me to read it to understand that all Pakistanis were not fanatical haters of everything Indian including Gandhiji If the Indian newspapers had reported it I had not seen it The editorials in the *New York Times* and the *Times*, London, had been cited because as even today the opinions of the Western media were more important for us

I tried to get hold of the *Pakistan Times* editorial of that day but in vain When I went to Lahore, I visited their office and even met the then editor, Sarfraz, with a request to permit me to look up the old files The *Pakistan Times* had been then taken over by the government for whom Leftists like Faiz were Communists Sarfraz couldn't help me in the matter nor could any correspondent Even keeping clippings of 'subversive' writings was hazardous under the Martial Law

Incidentally, about thirty years later in 1990 I had with me a copy of Benazir Bhutto's book, *Daughter of the East*, when I landed in Lahore The customs people virtually seized it as contraband, although Benazir had been the Prime Minister then for some months But for the customs officials the Zia period rules were still the law Luckily, that Pakistan has now been replaced by a bubbling babble of democracy like our country

The purpose of this rigmarole is to bring out my joy at seeing the editorial reprinted in the latest issue (January 24) of Sumit Chakravartty's *Mainstream* Let me quote a few sentences from it for the benefit of those who, like me, may be thrilled by them

> He (Gandhiji) saw, as few of us can fail to see, that spread out underneath the present political contours of India and Pakistan is one vast immensity of unhappiness and fear and suffering, and he strove, as few of us have had the courage to strive, to press back the dimensions of this suffering into circumscription and confine He saw as few of us can fail to see, that the present bloodshed and savagery are the beginnings of an unholy assault not only on our freedom, newly won, but also on our culture and civilisation inherited from our remote ancestors, and he fought, as few of us have had the courage to fight, against the frenzied onslaught And now he is gone

As far as I know, only Achyut Patwardhan—no Marxist like Faiz but intensely human—thought along those lines of Gandhiji's contribution to our culture Again, only perhaps Nehru could have echoed those thoughts I did not find a single editorial in the Indian newspapers which reflected such an assessment of the post-Gandhiji situation

Maybe being geographically closer to Bapu and his martyrdom, we were swayed by grief and even anger Jayaprakash Narayan had squarely blamed poor Sardar Patel for the assassination of Gandhiji as the Congress party has found scapegoats for Rajiv Gandhi's killing According to an item in the 'pages of history' feature of the *Tribune*, Ram Manohar Lohia demanded the resignation of the Nehru Government as atonement for the failure to save Gandhiji

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MEANWHILE, since the television networks have eclipsed the newspapers in discussing the situation in the run-up to the coming general election, let me stray to dwell on a few of them First, Doordarshan has definitely gone overboard in relegating the President's eve-of-the-Republic Day national broadcast to lead its main news bulletin with Sonia Gandhi's pyroteclinics at Chandigarh Like the BJP, I wouldn't attribute political motives for the *faux pas* Apparently, the non-professionals still setting the style for the professionals in Prasar Bharati have over-reacted to the Congress party's charge of pro-BJP bias against the Corporation Although, S S Gill seemed to have taken in his stride 'the slings and arrows' from the different contenders, the old bureaucratic habit of playing safe seemed to have prevailed

Even the privately owned TV channels and the newspapers next morning led with the President's address It used to be the rule of the thumb in our days not to look too keenly at news value in picking the lead on solemn occasions like Independence Day and Republic Day Also, there was much meat in the speech which was far from platitudinous

In this context, I watched an interview with Jyoti Basu by *The Statesman* Chief Editor, C R Irani, on a TV channel which I could not identify It was professional to its fingertips with Irani a picture of suavity unlike his column, Caveat, in *The Statesman* which often pours out prejudice Also, Irani's performance was like gentle rain compared to Thapar's noise and thunder in his weekly *hangama*—as the *philmi* expression goes—on Star TV

Another well-done television programme is the Eenadu TV's daily round-up of election news Chancing on it accidentally, I remained stuck to it for nearly 30 minutes With plenty of visuals and covering not only the Andhra Pradesh scene but other parts of the country also, it was wholesome The ads also were not too many, distracting attention

Talking of election coverage, there were some conventions in our time in *The Times of India* One was to distinguish stray by-elections from what is on the anvil, namely, a general election (with 'g' and 'e' in the lower case) It is the ticket (in the singular preceded by a definite article) and not tickets' I wonder why such norms have been jettisoned now In Hindi and other Indian languages like Telugu and Marathi, there are still conventions in referring to the elections but only the Indian English publications seem to be the exception The reference here to a reader's reaction to *The Times of India's* cheeky notice inviting contributions to the correspondence column American, Asian and African English are mentioned in it, to the exclusion of Indian English Maybe, because there are at least fifteen versions of Indian English, especially as she is spoke, the latest being Sonia Gandhi's prose

By the way, it was a pleasant surprise to see a very balanced account of the pre-election situation in the southern States in the *Organiser* which was realistic in assessing the BJP's prospects in Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu In contrast, the *National Herald* sees Lakshmi Parvati in Andhra Pradesh as a bridle round Atal Behari Vajpayee's neck, bracketing NTR's widow with Mamata Banerjee and Sonia Gandhi She is on record that she will not be satisfied until Chandrababu Naidu is sent to the Andamans—meaning a penal colony She also faulted him for seeking loans from the World Bank instead of the local Andhra Bank

Meanwhile, I am surprised at the silence of the newspapers at the harsh treatment of four senior officials of the Guwahati Doordarshan Kendra by the Assam police who put them behind the bars for an alleged lapse in covering a massacre of 18 persons by Bodo terrorists I have seen only one editorial in the *Deccan Herald* condemning the 'attack on the press' This is what happens when we let an external agency like the Election Commission dictate how the elections are to be covered, with apologies to the Press Council Chairman

Finally, the *Andhra Pradesh Times* had an interesting piece on the gaffés galore by the participants in the United Front rally in Hyderabad, especially, the photogenic Jayaprada But the report mentions Amar Singh as the representative of the Samata Party which is not in the United Front at all ■

PRADEEP KUMAR Political Fluidity

(Continued from page 22)

feudal control over resources, the legitimacy of a few political leaders over the resources has been challenged Increasing revelations of scams/scandals don't necessarily mean greater corruption, it also means faster collapse of the facade that some more sophisticated, urban upper caste political leaders could earlier maintain in public life

Democracy does not, after all, promise to be an ideal system of governance It is one that pertains to the people, and if "the people" (a majority of them of course) somehow get a chance to run it, they are bound to do so in their own "rustic" manner In a massive churning of the political ocean, symbolic of the mythical *samundra manthan*, some poison is bound to emerge alongwith, of course, the *amrit* (nectar) In any case any process of transformation is bound to be painful if it is accompanied by a fast pace of politicisation resulting in a topsy-turvy situation where those at the bottom have made an attempt to move upward by riding on the *mantra* of political empowerment ■

[A somewhat abridged version of this article has been published in *Avalanche*, from where it is being reproduced with acknowledgement]

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS (JANUARY 18-31, 1997)

NATIONAL

January 18

- BJP leader and former Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh Sunderlal Patwa announces, after his two-day hunger strike, to continue on indefinite fast till Chief Minister Digvijay Singh owns responsibility for firing on farmers at Multai in Betul district, apologises publicly and resigns
- A group of armed youth, supposed to be belonging to the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-Issac Muivah), which opposes the coming elections, sets ablaze all documents and electoral rolls in the presence of officials of the Tamei subdivision of Senapati district in Manipur, bordering Nagaland
- In a Meet-the-Press programme in Thiruvananthapuram, CPI-M General Secretary Harkishan Singh Surjeet says the earlier stand of his party not joining the UF Government has been reversed
- Railway Minister Ram Vilas Paswan says the government is considering legal experts on whether it could make public the Bofors documents, including the names of recipients of kickbacks in the Rs 1500 crore gun deal

January 19

- President K R Narayanan issues the notification for the Lok Sabha elections in Meghalaya and Tripura setting in motion the formal process for the four-phased parliamentary elections
- UF spokesman S Jaipal Reddy, the Union I & B Minister, tells pressmen after the UF Core Committee meeting in Hyderabad that the United Front decided to issue a full-fledged common manifesto
- CBI files a case of criminal conspiracy against NDTV chief Prannoy Roy, Star TV India chief Rati Kant Basu, formerly the Director-General of Doordarshan, and five other current and former senior officials of Doordarshan accusing them of a criminal conspiracy to grant favours to the NDTV abusing their official position and causing a loss of five crores of rupees to the state during 1990-96
- Reports appear in the press of an article by BJP Prime Ministerial candidate Atal Behari Vajpayee, posted on the Internet, offering three solutions to the "Muslim problem", namely, *tiraskar* (rejection), *puraskar* (appeasement) and *parishkar* (cleansing), giving his preference for the last option in order to change them and restore them to the mainstream
- Election Commission releases a policy order stating that no officers could be posted on poll duty in their home State and no recruitments are to be made till the completion of the poll process

January 20

- Assam Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, engaged in a legal battle with the CBI over the multi-crore Letter of Credit scam, discloses in Guwahati that he was approached by an emissary of CBI Director R C Sharma requesting to plead for his (Sharma's) extension in service in return for dilution of the charges against the CM in the above case
- CBI says the Bofors documents cannot be made public without the approval of the Swiss Government as it will adversely affect the probe and chances of getting further information
- Janata Dal Government of Karnataka led by J H Patel suffers a jolt as Revenue Minister Ramesh C Jijajingai, Industries Minister R V Deshpande and Minister of State for Youth Services and Sports Ajay Kumar Sarnaik resign alongwith three legislators Patel announces he will seek a vote of confidence on Janaury 27
- Union Textiles Minister R L Jalappa, having resigned earlier from the primary membership of the Janata Dal, submits his resignation from the Council of Ministers and says he intends to join the Congress

January 21

- Ahmedabad High Court rules that the salary and service conditions of Indian Air Force personnel should be decided by the government "in consultation with the Chief of the Air Staff"
- A CBI spokesman terms as "false and mischievous" the Assam Chief Minister's statement that he was approached by an emissary of CBI Director R C Sharma to support the extension of his term in return for dilution of the charges against the CM in the Letter of Credit scam
- Speaking at Mumbai the Dalai Lama discloses that he hoped for a breakthrough in the deadlock over Tibet as an influential former head of a state, not necessarily the US, is striving to build a bridge
- Election Commission announces restrictions on the publication of opinion and exit poll results Publications of opinion poll results is banned from 48 hours before the polls while the exit poll results are not to be published until polling in all the constituencies in the three phases is complete

January 22

- Congress issues its manifesto with the slogan *Arthik Swaraj, Garibon ka Raj* (Economic Independence, Rule of the Poor) and the pledge to defend the economic reforms charted by Dr Manmohan Singh and PV Narasimha Rao
- After a meeting with Pakistan High Commissioner Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray says the Pakistani cricket team was welcome to play in Mumbai provided Pakistan "improved its behaviour"
- UP Assembly Speaker Kesri Nath Tripathi asks the 23 Bahujan Samaj Party rebel legislators, now Ministers in the Kalyan Singh Government, to submit affidavits about their party affiliations
- Jammu and Kashmir police, in the biggest ever seizure, recovers a huge quantity of sophisticated weapons including 61 mm mortars of US make, Chinese grenades and assault rifles near the Line of Actual Control in Kupwara district

January 23

- Konkan Railway Corporation spokesperson Mohini Shroff informs that the century's 'biggest railway construction project, the Konkan Railway from Mumbai traversing down the west coast a distance of 760 kms, is complete and will be dedicated to the nation on the Republic Day The Konkan Railway passes over 2000 bridges and through hundred tunnels including one which is 6 44 kms long and is billed as Asia's longest

- Election Commission announces that Election Observers will have the power to stop counting of votes or declaration of results
- BJP President L K Advani welcomes the decision of the Election Commission to ban the publication and broadcast of opinion polls from February 14 to 28 and to impose similar restrictions on exit polls until the completion of the third phase of polling on February 28

January 24

- Union Home Minister Indrajit Gupta tells *The Week* in an interview that the Left parties never accused Rajiv Gandhi of being a recipient of the Bofors kickback but had charged him and his government with trying to cover-up the recipients of the pay-offs
- Congress releases its manifesto, summed up in two slogans *Arthik Swaraj, Garibon ka Raj* (Economic Independence, Rule of the Poor) and *Poore Bharat se Nata Hai, Desh Chalana Ata Hai* (We have Bonds with the Whole of India and We know how to Run a Government)
- Congress denies ticket to former Prime Minister PV Narasimha Rao and party President Sitaram Kesri says it is so because of his failure to prevent the demolition of the Babri Masjid

January 25

- President K R Narayanan, in his Address to the Nation on the eve of the Republic Day, calls upon the people to combat the dark forces of communalism and casteism and to dissociate themselves from individuals and groups who propagate and indulge in corruption, violence and crimes against society
- South African anti-apartheid fighter Walter Sisulu, Capt Lakshmi Sehgal, officer-commanding of the Rani Jhansi (all women) Regiment of the INA, and well-known jurist Nani A Palkhiwala are honoured with the award of Padma Vibhushan
- On the campaign for Congress trail, Ms Sonia Gandhi addresses a rally in Chandigarh, says the anti-Sikh riots of 1984 should never have happened and adds further that she fully understood "the anguish of the Sikhs over the events of June 6, 1984" ('Operation Bluestar')
- Indian troops find a tunnel under the Indo-Pakistan border in Punjab which, authorities believe, was to be used for smuggling arms and saboteurs into India
- President Jacques Chirac of France arrives to a ceremonial welcome in New Delhi as the chief guest on the Republic Day After a 75-minute talk between the visiting President and Prime Minister I K Gujral, the two sides sign two agreements aimed at combatting international terrorism, scams and other crimes and bringing fugitives to justice
- Late in the night when Muslims of the village Wandhama on the outskirts of Srinagar are offering *Shabe Qadr* (the night of investiture) prayers in the mosque, unidentified gunmen sneak in the village and drag Pandits from their houses and kill 23 in cold blood, the deceased include nine women and four children The village is in Chief Minister Dr Farooq Abdullah's constituency Farooq says the killing is a part of Pakistan's wicked game plan

January 26

- India celebrates Republic Day Presence of the French President as the chief guest at the cermonial parade in New Delhi and the display of air-power mark the highlights

January 27

- National Human Rights Commission, following a representation made by Kashmiri Pandits, issues a directive to the Centre and the J & K Government for shifting the Pandits, living in the Valley, to safer zones
- Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray extends his support to former Union Minister Suresh Kalmadi who is contesting from Pune as an independent candidate
- Chairman of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference Mirwaiz Maulvi Farooq expresses full support for a BJP Government headed by Atal Behari Vajpayee He seems to echo the sentiments of fundamentalists across the border, former Director General of Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) Asad Durrani wrote a couple of days ago that there was nothing wrong in the BJP wanting to establish a Hindu state and recalled Atal Behari Vajpayee's visit to Pakistan in the late seventies with nostalgic fondness
- J & K Government orders armed guards to be deployed in villages inhabited by Kashmiri Pandits and plans to form people's armed defence committees

January 28

- Judge V Navaneetham of the designated court at Poonamallee (Tamil Nadu) finds all the accused in the Rajiv Gandhi murder case guilty of conspiracy to assassinate the former Prime Minister and sentences all the 26 of them to death by hanging
- Lobendra Bora, senior Asom Gana Parishad leader of Nagaon, the home constituency of Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta, is shot dead at his residence, suspectedly by ULFA rebels who have called for a boycott of the February 16 Lok Sabha elections
- Prime Minister Gujral visits Wandhama village, the site of the massacre of 23 Kashmiri Pandits He says "It is an act of marauders sent from across the border We accept the challenge and we will overcome"
- Congress President Sitaram Kesri and Ms Sonia Gandhi appear on a common platform to address a campaign rally at Rohtak where Kesri offers her the leadership of the party

January 29

- Senior Congress leader Pranab Mukherjee, briefing pressmen, says denial of ticket to PV Narasimha Rao had nothing to do with the demolition of the Babri Masjid The vandalism, he adds, was the end product of a conspiracy of the *Sangh Parivar*
- Chairman of the Minorities Commission Dr Tahir Mahmood demands that the Commission's jurisdiction should be extended to cover the non-Muslim minorities of Jammu and Kashmir
- Quoting unnamed sources, *The Asian Age* reveals that former CBI Director Joginder Singh repeatedly blocked attempts of the investigating agency officials to question Assam Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta in connection with the LoC scam

January 30

- Centre for Media Studies releases statistics to assert that the Lok Sabha elections will cost a whopping Rs 4600 crores, that is, Rs 90 per vote
- United Front releases its manifesto which promises a stable government, corruption free, clean and accountable administration, improvement in the living conditions of minorities and additional reservations

for Dalit Christians

- *Mahatma Gandhi Smriti Sadbhavna Jyoti* brought by youth volunteers from Porbandar (Gujarat), Champaran (Bihar), Jallianwala Bagh (Punjab), Vaikom (Kerala) and Sodepur (West Bengal, bordering on Noakhali in Bangladesh) arrive at Gandhi Smriti in Tees January Marg, New Delhi, the place where Gandhiji was shot dead by a fanatic this day 50 years ago The *Jyoti*-bearing *yatris* are received by President K R Narayanan, Vice-President Krishan Kant, Prime Minister I K Gujral, former Presidents Dr Shankar Dayal Sharma and R Venkataraman, Union HRD Minister S R Bommai, Director-General of UNESCO Federico Mayor and Vice-Chairman of Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti B N Pande

January 31

- Uttar Pradesh Government, in a bid to appease the Hindu voters, withdraws all criminal cases against the Ram Janmabhoomi movement Cases related to the demolition of the Babri Masjid, however, have not been dropped
- Eight people are killed and 50 injured when troops open fire on a mob protesting the arrest of a few persons during a search opeation in the Kishtwar Tehsil in eastern Kashmir
- Congress Vice-President Jitendra Prasada discloses that the decision to deny ticket to PV Narasimha Rao was taken by the party President Sitaram Kesri

INTERNATIONAL

January 18

- Iraqi Government announces that the Iraqi Minister-plenipotentiary, Hikmat-Al-Hajou, his wife and several other Iraqis were murdered in Amman, the Jordanian capital, at night on January 17
- Majority of deputies in Iran's 270-seat Parliament support supreme leader Ali Khamenei rejecting any ties or links with the US proposed by President Mohammad Khatami in a television address
- British Prime Minister Tony Blair is assembling a broad alliance on Europe which will include top Opposition figures and isolate those who are opposed to closer ties with the European Union
- IRA-allied Sinn-Fein party rejects a British-Irish plan for the future of Northern Ireland
- Leading Malay language dailies of Kuala Lumpur criticise University of Malaya, the oldest university of Malaysia, for allowing US fast food chain Macdonalds to open a shop in the campus

January 19

- British Foreign Minister Robin Cook arrives in Beijing on an official visit hoping for a broad new engagement with China on issues ranging from trade to environment and human rights
- Bangladesh Parliament meets in a brief session amid continuing boycott by the main Opposition, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party led by former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia Informal talks initiated by the government are being held to pave the way for the BNP's return to the winter session
- *Reports on Economic Development Policy and Priorities* submitted by the NWFP and Sind provinces of Pakistan to the Federal Government under the Pakistan Prime Minister's 2010 Programme underline immediate decentralisation of power and autonomy in accordance with the 1973 Constitution
- The Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflicts, that includes elderly statesmen like former Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and Britain's Lord Owen, recommends the formation of a UN 'fire brigade" ready to step in and prevent war anywhere whenever it seems imminent
- Addressing a meeting of his party, the Fatah, in the Gaza city, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat warns he would launch a new Intifada if the peace process remains deadlocked
- Chinese Defence Minister Gen Chi Haotian and US Defence Secretary William Cohen sign an agreement in Beijing committing both countries' armed forces to hold regular meetings to discuss their sea and air forces

January 20

- UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's special envoy Alvaro de Soto arrives in Rangoon to urge the ruling State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) to speed up the drafting of the Constitution and hold elections
- Alan Gough from Tracing Recovering and Collection, a team of lawyers based in the Isle of Man, tells Reuters that upto $500 billion in dirty money is hidden offshore around the world and money laundering is the fastest growing crime in the world
- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, speaking to a major Jewish organisation in Washington, calls on the PLO to change its charter which stipulates "destruction of Israel"
- Indonesian President Suharto accepts his party's nomination to run for the seventh five-year term
- Chinese Presdient Jiang Zemin assures visiting US Defence Secretary William Cohen that it will not sell cruise missiles to Iran, nor will it provide technology to improve the existing missiles
- Pope John Paul II arrives in Havana on a five-day visit to Cuba and is received by President Fidel Castro at the Jose Marti airport

January 21

- US President Bill Clinton is reported to be "outraged" and "vehemently denies" a fresh accusation of sexual harassment by former White House intern Monica Lewinsky
- Pakistan's *Financial Post* quotes Swiss press reports to inform that Swiss courts, having found enough evidence, have started criminal proceedings against former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, her husband Asif Ali Zardari and their associates
- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu meets US President Bill Clinton in Washington but refuses to accept the latter's proposal for a military pullback on the West Bank even after a late night informal meeting lasting 90 minutes No new meeting has been scheduled to end the deadlock
- Iraq imposes a freeze on the access to Presidential palaces by the UN arms inspection team and links it to the lifting of the oil embargo
- Three bomb blasts in Algiers kill the person trying to plant a bomb at the University gate and injure three others The other two blasts cause damage to the building but there is no loss of life

January 22

- Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, addressing a meeting of the Muttahida (former Mohajir) Qaumi Movement in Karachi, promises to punish those who were responsible for the 1971 dismemberment of

Pakistan and for not honouring the mandate of the 1970 elections which gave a majority to the Awami League of East Pakistan headed by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman

- Celebrated violinist Yehudi Menuhin tells the French paper *Le Figaro* in Paris "Israel's mission is no longer that of a promised land for a persecuted people That's over Israel's mission now is more important it is to make peace in West Asia" He warns that "those who want Jerusalem for themselves were always defeated"
- Awami National Party, an ally of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's ruling Pakistan Muslim League, threatens to part ways over the issue of renaming NWFP as Pakhtoonkhwa
- Pope John Paul II in Havana gives his message saying "May Cuba, with all its magnificent potential, open itself up to the world, and may the world open itself up to Cuba"

January 23

- Secretaries of Water Resources Ministries of India and Nepal meeting in Kathmandu decide to "instruct the Joint Group of Experts to meet at the earliest date to expedite the progress to finalise a water sharing agreement"
- Member of British Parliament from Bradford West Marsha Singh presses Home Secretary Jack Straw to free Mohammed Riaz and Qayyum Raja of Pakistan who are undergoing long sentences of imprisonment for kidnapping and murder of Indian diplomat R Mhatre in 1984
- Palestinian President Yasser Arafat meets his US counterpart Bill Clinton in the US and gives him a letter detailing articles and clauses in the Palestinian National Charter which challenged Isrrael's right to exist and had been abrogated by the PLO Parliament in 1996
- Following a UN Security Council briefing by an International Atomic Energy Agency expert, the United States and Britain block an attempt by Russia, China and France to declare Iraq free of nuclear weapons

January 24

- Pakistan Foreign Ministry spokesman says they have received proposals from India to break the deadlock in peace talks between the two countries which are being studied and the talks would be resumed if Islamabad found New Delhi to have "come back" to an agreement reached last June in Islamabad
- US President Bill Clinton and top Cabinet officials have concluded, reports the *Washington Post*, that they have no recourse but to strike at Iraq to force it to comply with the UN resolutions
- Islamabad weekly *Friday Times* reports that the Taliban forces of Afghanistan are shifting their base to Pakistan pinning their hopes on newly-elected Pakistan President Rafique Tarar to secure "more moral and political support from Pakistan for their activists fighting in Kashmir"
- Mir Aimal Kanshi, who ambushed CIA workers at the gates of the Agency's headquarters in Langley, Virginia, five years ago and was tracked and abducted from a hotel room in Pakistan by FBI agents last year, was tried in Fairfax (Virginia) for killing two officials and injuring three others, is convicted by the jury of capital murder and is recommended death penalty

January 25

- *The New York Times* reports top US officials to say "There will be one final round of diplomacy and then an ultimatum and then we act" White House officials tell the *Time* that the countdown will begin on Friday when Ramzan, the Islamic month of fasting, ends
- Tamil Tiger rebels carry out a daring suicide bombing when three in a truck crash through the roadblock and detonate the explosive laden vehicle in front of the Temple of the Tooth, the country's holiest Buddhist shrine in the central town of Kandy Eleven are reported killed and a dozen injured The temple's roof comes down crashing and windows are shattered all over the town Later a furious mob torches a Hindu temple in the town
- US President Bill Clinton acknowledges to his friends, reports the *Washington Post*, that he became emotionally close to Ms Monica Lewinsky but the relationship was never sexual
- Pope John Paul II celebrating a mass in the Antonio Macco Revolution Square in Santiago (Cuba), calls for the release of dissidents, recognition of freedom of association and initiation of a peaceful political debate

January 26

- Yasser Arafat calls for an urgent Arab summit to discuss the deadlocked peace process in the Middle East He briefs the Algerian President

THE MEDIA FOUNDATION

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New Delhi
December 8, 1997

B G. Verghese
Chairman

and the Moroccan King on the failure of US President Bill Clinton's efforts in the face of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's intransigence

- Pope John Paul II leaves Cuba giving a call for broad reforms to Cuba and an end to "oppressive economic measures—unjust and ethically unacceptable—imposed from outside the country"
- Russian President Boris Yeltsin sends his Deputy Foreign Minister Viktor Posuvalyuk to Baghdad in his effort to mediate in the standoff with the UN arms inspection team and the Iraqi Government
- Pentagon hosts its first Iftar party for the 10,000 Muslims in the US armed forces Deputy Defence Secretary John Hamre, addressing the gathering of Muslims, Jews and Christians, says "We are brothers and sisters A good believer is a great soldier"

January 27

- Britain's Northern Ireland Security Minister Adam Ingram underlines the determination of the two governments to advance the peace process and sets a May deadline to find a solution
- Leading Islamic figure of Indonesia Amien Rais criticises the government for the worsening economic crisis and demands reforms in the political power structure alongwith economic reforms
- Norway's former Prime Minister Ms Gro Harlem Bruntland is elected Director-General of the World Health Organisation (WHO) defeating Dr Nafis Sadek of Pakistan

January 28

- Pakistan's Ehtesh (accountability) Cell runs into trouble as certain key files of cases against former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, her husband and her mother are missing
- Sri Lanka shifts the venue of its golden jubilee celebrations from the historic city of Kandy to Colombo after the truck bombing on the holiest Buddhist shrine
- Morteza Firoozi, editor-in-chief of the English language *Iran News* of Teheran, jailed since May on charges of spying for the US, is sentenced to death
- Chief UN Weapons Inspector Richard Butler is quoted by *The New York Times* to assert that Iraq has enough biological material to blow away Tel Aviv and has loaded it onto missile warheads which could be driven around to avoid being hit by bombs Some Security Council members complain that the press was given information that were denied to diplomats

January 29

- Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov, in Madrid for a meeting with US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, tells reporters he had some doubts whether a military strike could be averted, but he adds "Russia will make every effort to find a solution by political and diplomatic means"
- Ms Madeleine Albright says Washington was ready, with or without international backing, to unleash an attack from its force of 30 ships and 300 warplanes
- President Saddam Hussein declares that Iraq would resist any US attack with all its might
- Tarakzai tribals of Peshawar threaten to blow up the Warsak dam and cut off electricity to the whole of Pakistani Punjab if power supply is not restored immediately to their areas
- Supporters of the ousted first Prime Minister of Cambodia, Prince Norodom Ranariddh, reject the panel to oversee the elections to be held in the coming July

January 30

- Russia and the US fail to narrow the rift between them over the use of force against Iraq After a 90-minute meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Y Primakov in Madrid, Madeleine Albright, the US Secretary of State, says "We agree with the Russian Federation that we prefer a diplomatic solution but I remain sceptical that diplomacy will solve this problem"
- Pakistani daily *The Dawn* reports that Ministers in the Nawaz Sharif Cabinet came down heavily on intelligence agencies blaming every mishap and terrorist activity on "foreign hand" and "a neighbouring country" in order to cover up their failure to apprehend criminals and troublemakers
- Fund raiser for the Democratic Party Yah Lin "Charlie" Trie and an associate are indicted by a grand jury in Washington on charges stemming from the 1996 Presidential campaign finance scandal
- Iraq invites foreign diplomats to lunch at a palace in Takrit, the home town of President Saddam Hussein alongwith tours of three other palaces at Al-Tharthar and Baghdad Deputy Defence Minister Tariq Aziz says "We have nothing to hide Guests are welcome but when a spy enters your house that's different"

January 31

- A grenade explodes in the offices of Sri Lanka's main Opposition, the United National Party, in Kandy UNP leaders blame the attack on President Chandrika Kumaratunga's People's Alliance party
- Iran sentences German businessman Helmut Hofer, 54, to death for having extra-marital relations in Mashhad, with an unmarried Muslim woman The woman is sentenced to lashes
- A group of Iranian members of Parliament receive approval of the Interior Ministry to form the Islamic Iran Solidarity Party, the first political party since the 1979 Islamic revolution
- US State Department's annual report criticises many Asian countries for human rights abuses but, for the first time, acknowledges that terrorists from across the border are harassing, killing and intimidating the civilian population in Jammu and Kashmir ■

Corrigendum

In the Republic Day Special issue of *Mainstream* (January 24, 1998) it was mentioned in the covering note of A K Damodaran in the introduction to the Document—"India and World Peace Internationalist Perspective of Indian Nationalism Eighty Years Ago"—on page 13 that Lala Hardayal arrived in Stockholm at the end of 1917 Actually, Damodaran informed subsequently, he reached there at the end of 1918 The relevant sentence (the last one in Damodaran's note) should read

> Lala Hardayal, who was also in Germany but did not belong to this ideological group, reached Stockholm only by the end of 1918

This error is regretted

—*Editor*

Posted at CPSO in New Delhi on February 6/7, 1998 **Delhi Postal REGD No DL-11037/98**
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Edited and published by Sumit Chakravartty *for* PERSPECTIVE PUBLICATIONS PRIVATE LTD, 145/1D, Shahpur Jat (First Floor), (Near Asiad Village), New Delhi-110049 *Printed at* NEW DELHI PRINTERS, 20/7 Old Market, West Patel Nagar, New Delhi-110008 *Editor* Sumit Chakravartty *Editorial Adviser* Nikhil Chakravartty *Manager* Jasjit Kay Nagra

Mainstream

VOL XXXVI No 8 February 14, 1998 Rs 7

Between Devil and Deep Sea : the Voters' Dilemma

ARUN GHOSH

Election Manifestos and 'Economic Reforms'

SATYAPAL DANG

Politicians and Corruption

RUDDAR DATT

Voluntary Disclosure Scheme (1997) and Black Money

SARASWATI HAIDER

Delhi Slums in the Season of Fresh Promises

AMAR FAROOQUI'S REFLECTIONS ON THE NOVEMBER SCHOOL-BUS TRAGEDY : "HOW THE CITY DEVOURS ITS CHILDREN"

The Voters' Dilemma

As the poll fever rises the complexities of the twelfth Lok Sabha elections are coming to the fore as never before The results of several opinion polls provide enough evidence to suggest that the BJP's concerted bid to capture power at the Centre has not been stalled by Sonia Gandhi's belated entry into the electoral campaign but there is no denying that she has definitely given a new lease to life to the Congress One cannot conclude that the elections would *most certainly* lead to yet another hung Parliament (as has been declared in one of the opinion poll results) for it would be foolhardy to proclaim anything with a degree of certainty since the pre-poll scenario is marked by uncertainty at all levels while there is no visible sign of any wave there could well be a wind to help the BJP and its allies sail through and emerge victorious eventually At the other end of the spectrum Sonia Gandhi is not being able to draw large crowds uniformly throughout the country in spite of the confidence and enthusiasm she has been able to infuse in the Congress masses (not to be mistaken as the common people in general) The 'third force' represented by the United Front is, however, all set to come a distant third notwithstanding the fact that this is the best of the three alternatives before the public since through its instrument the federal structure of our polity—and hence democracy—can be reinforced, as its 18-month functioning at the Centre has proved beyond any shadow of doubt whatever be its other acts of omission and commission

The danger to Indian democracy stemming from the BJP due to its RSS connection had been dealt with fairly comprehensively in these columns last week One had not minimised the importance of other issues—including the question of the feudal 'dynastic' culture being revived by the Congress—in these elections, but one had felt that before the BJP-RSS threat no other issue could acquire greater prominence Nevertheless, from the same standpoint of Indian democracy it would be a grave mistake to cast a blind eye to the danger the 'dynastic' culture (which the Congress is trying to bring back under the slogan *Sonia lao desh bachao*) poses at present

In a highly perceptive edit-page article in *The Times of India* (February 11, 1998), the daily's Editorial Adviser, H K Dua, writes

> While Congressmen are unlikely to see beyond their immediate need to capture a few more seats, the voter has to see that there is an essential conflict between a dynastic rule and growth of democracy Mrs Sonia Gandhi's carefully calibrated capture of the leadership of the Congress party, her election campaign across the country with Rahul, Priyanka and her husband Robert Vadra in tow throws up the vital question whether a dynasty that was responsible for the imposition of the Emergency Raj not long ago should be voted to power or a democratic dispensation that sustains on the people's support rather than the patronage of 10 Janpath The choice before the electorate is clearly between dynasty and democracy
>
> Maybe Mrs Sonia Gandhi and her friends think that India has acquired the attributes of a banana republic which can be easily manipulated The people might as well disabuse them of such exaggerated notions

The points highlighted in the article cannot possibly be brushed aside Even if one leaves aside the 'foreigner' angle, the poser with regard to the 'banana republic' is too weighty to be ignored But essentially the fact remains that the 'dynastic' cullture—whether practised by the Congress or any other political party—militates

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Limits to Brinkmanship

Uncle Sam is once again playing the game it loves most brinkmanship Once again the target is Saddam Hussain But unlike on previous occasions this time the US President—Bill Clinton (following the footsteps of his predecessor, George Bush, who was responsible for igniting the Bush fire over Iraq seven years ago)—is slightly off-colour He seems to be on the defensive beleaguered as he is by the latest in a series of sexual affairs (the one involving Monica Lewinsky) threatening his Presidency However, make no mistake there is no faltering on his part when it comes to attacking Iraq—all the more so now to keep the reports on his liaisons with Lewinsky off the frontpages of newspapers So he is trying his best to torpedo Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov's sincere efforts to find a diplomatic solution to the problems relating to Iraq opening the disputed palaces (where Saddam Hussain is alleged to have stored chemical, bilogical—and even nuclear—weapons) for inspection by the UN weapons inspectors

Clinton has instead spoken of giving a fitting rebuff to Iraq when force is used which is to say that the air attacks won't amount to mere 'pinpricks' as his loyal Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has underscored parroting her President In the terminology of the US Administration such a rebuff means ousting Saddam from power—an objective that has eluded both Clinton and his predecessor This exposes the 'weakness' of the sole surviving superpower, also revealed in its public endorsement of the Primakov initiatives (while doing everything possible to subvert them from behind the scenes)

Overall, the world seems slightly different from what it was in 1991 so much so that Russia has at long last declared outright in Primakov's voice "We will not allow anyone to speak to us in a commanding tone" Even if the Pentagon has its way and eventually orders air strikes on Iraq, the latest developments in the Gulf clearly signify that Washington cannot enjoy unfettered licence to act as the global supercop

February 11 *Charvak*

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against the ethos of democracy Of course, Sonia Gandhi has every right to campaign in and contest the elections, but was it proper to thrust her on the Congress—and the country—in the manner in which it was done? Sitaram Kesri, of all persons, even offered her the Prime Minister's *gaddi* conveniently forgetting that that was the prerogative of the people of the country, not the head of any political party, howsoever powerful All such acts of sycophancy strike at the very roots of democratic norms

But then democracy has seldom been safeguarded under the Congress that continues to bear the name of Indira Gandhi Some persons in their eagerness to defame Jawaharlal Nehru for all the country's present-day ills associate him with Indira Gandhi in this context That is a travesty of truth If Nehru had so desired he could have anointed her as his political heir to Prime Ministership before his death in May 1964 Instead, the democrat that he was, he chose Lal Bahadur Shastri for the post Indira was brought in on Shastri's untimely demise by Kamaraj Nadar as an antidote to Morarji, not because Kamaraj had any intention of giving a 'dynastic' slant to her accession to the Prime Minister's Office However, when Indira came out in her true colours she did everything to destroy inner-party democracy—and let us admit that the process began right frrom the time of the Congress split in 1969—on the one hand, and ensuring 'dynastic' succession on the other (because, we were told by her admirers, "she could trust none except her progeny") As a consequence democracy became the casualty and this was best revealed by the way in which she imposed Emergency on the country in mid-1975

By referring to the battle between 'dynasty and democracy' one is not projecting the BJP, the Congress' principal opponent today, as the standard-bearer of democratic principles The secret and non-transparent *modus operandi* of the RSS, under whose patronage the BJP exists, is the clearest testimony to the anti-democratic character of the *Hindutva* lobby, the BJP's closest ally—the Shiv Sena under Bal Thackeray—giving further proof of the *Sangh Parivar*'s lip-service to democracy But what needs to be realised is that by vigorously promoting the 'dynastic' culture (whatever the extent of enthusiasm it has generated among the Congress followers) the Congress is in effect helping the BJP to emerge as the champion of democracy The lack of transparency that is associated with Sonia Gandhi and the widespread public perception that her family members and friends were the actual beneficiaries of the Bofors pay-off also add strength to the BJP on that score since the United Front is not effectively fighting the Sonia phenomenon beyond rhetorical outbursts

The Congress is still not bereft of persons of integrity and impeccable democratic credentials even if they are fast dwindling at the moment Can they not ponder over the means by which they can restore those credentials in the party that Indira Gandhi sought to discard since 1969? An initiative with that end in view—aimed also at ridding the organisation of the 'dynastic' culture which seems to have struck deep roots within the party—is essential since it would go a long way towards protecting the fabric of Indian democracy currently exposed to assaults from various quarters including the Sonia brigade This is a task which they must take up in all seriousness regardless of the outcome of the forthcoming elections

But as of now with Sonia and the BJP having emerged as the two main contenders in the electoral competition, the bulk of the electorate—especially in those places where the voters do not find the United Front constituents among the principal contestants—is caught between the devil and the deep sea

February 11 S C

Election Manifestos and 'Economic Reforms'

ARUN GHOSH

Since the English print-media have been repeatedly emphasising that *all* political parties have now accepted the 'economic reform' programme—unleashed over 1991-96 under the pressure of the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO—and more particularly, that there is no specific economic agenda at issue during the forthcoming elections, it becomes important to scan the Election Manifestos of the major all-India political parties to see whether the media perceptions and interpretation have any validity In what follows, the Election Manifestos of *four* parties (or groups) have been dissected from this limited point of view

Congress Manifesto

THE Congress Manifesto has indirectly underlined the importance of 'economic reforms' It has emphasised, *inter alia*, that

> The only answer to our problems is growth and more growth, growth in agriculture, industry and services and growth with more social justice and concern for the environment

It adds

> What is true self-reliance? We will be truly self-reliant when we can pay for our imports through our exports We will be truly self-reliant when we at least double our share of world trade over the next five years We will be truly self-reliant when we open up further so that Indian businessmen and goods conquer the world and are able to face up to and withstand foreign competition in the home market

The Congress Manifesto goes on to add

> We will be truly self-reliant when we are able to keep our internal and external debt profile at manageable and sustainable levels

Finally, the Congress Manifesto states

> The Congress will continue to fight for India's interests in world forums like the WTO At the same time, it will *honour all international commitments in a responsible manner* (emphasis added)

While the Congress Manifesto has claimed to promote employment-intensive growth, to balance exports and imports, and to contain internal and external debt to manageable proportions, the precise *modus operandi* of securing these diverse objectives has not been either spelt out or fully analysed What is noteworthy is the pledge to "honour all international commitments", and these relate, presumably, to the WTO

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BJP Manifesto

THE BJP Manifesto takes a different stand by proclaiming at the outset (in the context of 'economic reforms')

> We advocated the reinstatement of the Swadeshi idea particularly because of the heavily one-sided pro-West WTO in the offing

(It is noteworthy in this context that in the 13-day old government of the BJP in 1996, the Finance Minister, Jaswant Singh, had accepted the ongoing economic reforms)

The BJP Manifesto is now quite categorical in this context,

> Swadeshi simply means 'India First' National Development will largely depend upon national effort and national capital and savings Every nation advocates free trade in all global fora, but, in practice, they compulsively resort to quotas, tariffs and anti-dumping measures to protect their national interests Whether it is the USA or it is Japan While the declared agenda is free trade, the undeclared, but actual agenda is economic nationalism India, too, must follow its own national agenda

Further, the BJP Manifesto recommends

> rapid, large-scale internal liberalisation, but calibrated globalisation so that the Indian industry gets seven to ten years for substantial integration with the world economy
>
> All policies of tariff reduction and lifting of quantitative restrictions will be formulated taking the above facts into accounts (sic), but the objective will be to protect the national economy

On Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), the BJP Manifesto states

> The BJP Government will frame policies to restrict FDI in non-priority areas FDI will be encouraged to promote exports rather than target the domestic market FDI is welcome in a non-predatory role in joint ventures rather than 100 per cent subsidiaries Again takeovers of existing Indian companies by foreign companies will not be encouraged

It is noteworthy that the BJP Manifesto is silent on the issue of inflow of short-term external capital, especially FII investment in portfolio capital (and other forms of short term liabilities)

On WTO issues, there is a separate, explicit reference in the BJP Manifesto

> The major task facing the country in the economic sphere is the preservation of a measure of autonomy in the management of the national economy Agriculture, which concerns the bulk of our people, and, in particular, WTO issues connected with subsidies, fertilisers and seeds so that the interests of the farmer and consumer of food are not sacrificed would be adquately examined No

> legislations concerning agriculture and commitments under the Uruguay Round would be allowed to be implemented without full democratic discussion
>
> The small-scale sector, which is the backbone of our economy and employment, would not be exposed to unequal competition, both from large houses in the country and from the transnational corporations from abroad The agreement on services, particularly financial services, would be monitored in respect of powerful foreign interests in our country The patent system, in particular, would not be allowed to become an import monopoly and working of a patent and dissemination of technology would be ensured by an effective and strong 'license of right' and 'compulsory license' regime

Manifesto of the Left Parties

THE CPI-M, CPI, RSP and Forward Bloc have issued a joint Manifesto wherein a whole section is titled "for an Alternative Economic Policy" The main elements therein are (a) radical land reforms, (b) increased public investment in agriculture and irrigation and self-sufficiency in foodgrains production, (c) minimum wages for agricultural workers, equal wages for equal work, and pension and other social benefits and provision of homestead land, (d) revival of sick units and ending of disinvestment in profitable public sector units, provision of need based minimum wage and protective legislation for unorganised workers, and grant of pension working people, (e) increased public investment in infrastructure, (f) strengthening of the public sector in core and strategic areas, (g) foreign capital to be solicited in those areas for which clearcut priorities are set, (h) protection of domestic industry from indiscriminate lowering of import duties and takeover of existing Indian companies by foreign companies, (i) encouragement to small scale industries, and protection of handloom, coir industry, etc , (j) end to deployment of deep sea fishing trawlers, (k) India to take the lead to forge common cause with countries of the South to safeguard our interests with regard to TRIPS, TRIMS and financial services, (l) the insurance sector not to be privatised and the trend of privatising the banking sector to be halted and property regulation of non-banking fiance companies, (m) regulation of capital flows and no convertibility on capital account, and (n) strengthening and expansion of the public distribution system

Janata Dal Manifesto

THE Janata Dal Manifesto states that the Dal

> will follow a balanced approach towards globalisation and liberalisation, keeping in view the objective of India's autonomous development (and) the bitter consequences experienced recently by many developing countries of South-East Asia and Latin America The recent WTO demand asking India to amend the Patent Laws for pharmaceutical and agrochemical products is inimical to the interests of India's rural poor All this requires a hard reassessment of the implications of the ongoing globalisation and liberalisation for India

Further,

> The Janata Dal will not allow entry of foreign investors to the detriment of Indian industries
>
> The Janata Dal will not open up the country's insurance sector for foreign companies

Regarding public sector enterprises,

> efforts will be not to wind up the public sector but to improve its functioning by professionalising its management and by providing it real autonomy the disinvestment programme will be redesigned in such a way as to retain majority shareholding (and) effected through largely indigenous privatisation

The Janata Dal Manifesto argues for

> continuing the policy of self-reliance A national food security scheme is the first pillar of self-reliance Developing our own science and technology through greater R&D investment is another dimension we shall endeavour to meet the country's requirements as far as possible from within the available resources of the country self-reliance is not isolation It is a shield against the position of helplessness

Finally,

> every citizen has the right to productive and gainful employment (and) The social and economic policy of the Janata Dal will be geared to the realisation of the right to work as a fundamental right

One should add that the implications of the above statement have not been fully worked out

Samata Party Manifesto

THOUGH relatively small in representation in Parliament, the Samata Party may yet be treated as an all-India party, and has a very clear economic agenda It focuses on

> Full Employment as (the) first priority creating a people oriented system of production (reversing) the past trend of anti-employment and anti-people economic policies

The Samata Party Manifesto goes on to say

> Swadeshi will be the watchword of our policy We shall not allow Indian enterprise to be overpowered by the mega corporations of the rich world in the name of globalisation Special protection will be given to small-scale and tiny industries which generate large-scale employment

According to the Samata Party Manifesto,

> suitable reordering will be done in investment priorities The party is totally opposed to the opening of the Insurance sector to foreign companies

Finally,

> Foreign investment and technology will be allowed very selectively, based purely on national needs and interests the public sector should be allowed to retain its role at the commanding heights in important infrastructural and service areas We make a clear choice in favour of labour intensive technology against capital intensive technology in several fields No consumer items which can be manufactured by the masses in the small sector should be allowed to be manufactured by large companies

Comments and Concluding Remarks

QUOTATIONS from the Election Manifestos of *four* major all-India parties/groups of parties (in the case of the Left) have been given *in extenso* (without much comment) thus far, to emphasise two points First, *other than the Congress party, all parties have expressed either strong reservation or direct opposition to many elements of the ongoing economic reforms programme* There are, in fact, many common elements in the general opposition to several aspects of the extant economic reform policies, and indeed, even diametrically opposite parties, namely, the BJP (and the Samata Party) on the one hand and the Left parties on the other, have categorically announced vigorous opposition to many elements of the policies of economic reform and untrammelled 'globalisation'

The English media do not appear to have, thus far, adequately highlighted this important point In fact, the media perception has been that economic policies are *not* in the forefront among the issues presented to the voters in the upcoming elections, that the issues are the stability (of governments), the 'secular'/non-secular (or communal) approaches of different parties/groups, and the 'centralising' approach of some parties *vis-a-vis* the cooperative federalism of others

And yet, both the BJP and the Left parties—at two opposite ends of the pole—have been strongly critical of many aspects of the reform/globalisation policies They have their own (separate, and quite clearcut) agenda in regard to economic development *There is a choice* for the voters, insofar as economic policies are concerned

The second point that emerges, from the economic policies recommended in the Manifestos cited earlier, is that on occasion, there are serious internal inconsistencies, first as between pronouncements and actual policies pursued, and secondly, as between different elements even in the pronouncements

For example, the BJP Manifesto is quite vehement in its opposition to many aspects of the ongoing globalisation (and economic reform) policies, and yet, the action taken by many BJP run State Governments (and statements made by the 13-day old Atal Behari Vajpayee Government at the Centre in 1996) are at variance in many ways with the approach outlined in the Election Manifesto of the BJP

The same inconsistency appears in the Janata Dal pronouncements, action taken (while in power) and the Manifesto Perhaps the most glaring aspect of this inconsistency is the statement made recently by the Prime Minister, Inder Kumar Gujral, that globalisation and economic reform policies are now accepted by all political parties Incidentally, the JD Manifesto has endorsed the Taraporewala Committee recommendations on *full convertibility* of the rupee (that is, capital account convertibility) unmindful of the fact that Thailand had a budgetary surplus of three per cent of the GDP in 1996, and yet, Thailand was the first of the South-East Asian countries to be devastated by currency turmoils arising directly as a result of capital account convertibility

Though this essay is essentially concerned with the approach of the different (all-India) political parties to globalisation and economic reform, one cannot help the feeling that the BJP Manifesto tends to "satisfy everyone" by professing to stand for everyone's interests

That covers the farm sector, large-scale corporate industry, the small-scale producers, the cottage industry—and informal—sector, even the Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) How precisely these divergent interests would be reconciled, and how resources would be raised for development, is not explained (However, that issue—the problem of resources—has not been tackled by any party)

Speaking of internal inconsistency, the Congress Manifesto is quite clearly the worst offender, and it does not even attempt to clarify as to how, for instance, its policy stance is consistent with the statement that the

> Congress's top priority has always been employment—intensive growth Jobless growth is socially unacceptable

And yet, 1991-96 has been characterised by this type of growth and by increased concentration

To conclude this essay, a final comment would be in order While Election Manifestos have traditionally been taken to imply essentially "promises" made to the electorate, in the current setting—and in view of some recent policy developments which have questionable validity in terms of the Constitution of India—the approach of different political parties to "globalisation" and "economic reform" policies is of special interest

It is also important in this context to categorically state that the perceptions of different political parties is not only not the same—there is *no* general acceptance of all aspects of the ongoing reform process—there are in fact substantive differences in the approach of different parties

To that extent, the *myth*, spread by the media, that there is a wide consensus on the ongoing economic reforms programme, needs to be dispelled The people of India need to be told clearly and categorically what type of economy the different political parties stand for, so that the electorate may make a conscious choice, and vote accordingly ■

RSS and BJP

PARVATHY A.A.

Quite often the nature of the relationship that exists between the RSS and the BJP has assumed significance not only for these organisations but also for the public Many fail to understand, leave alone appreciate, the subtle difference and distance that exists between the RSS and the BJP This write-up is an attempt to bring out the contradictions, cooperation and conflicts between the RSS and the BJP

Innumerable questions arise regarding the relationship of the RSS with the BJP Many have begun to raise the issue of the RSS' relationship with the BJP Is the RSS losing its grip over the BJP or is the BJP coalescing with the RSS? What would be the position of the BJP without the connection of the RSS if hypothetically the BJP breaks off from the RSS? Has the BJP succeeded in establishing its own identity as a political party? Has it been able to offer solutions to various problems facing the country? The BJP's links with the RSS—does it strengthen the BJP or lead to its nemesis? All these questions are posed because unlike in the case of the Jan Sangh there has been a massive influx of new recruits from a non-RSS background into the BJP alongwith open and widespread infighting in the party

Moreover, in the contemporary period there is the failure on the part of the RSS to distance itself from politics as was done during Golwalkar's period This was obvious in the 1996 elections when more than 10,000 RSS volunteers actively worked for BJP candidates in UP alone After the poll results were announced there was a formal meeting between the RSS and the BJP on May 11, 1996 at Hedgewar Bhavan, the RSS headquarters in Delhi, in which both Rajendra Singh, Sarsanghchalak of the RSS, and Vajpayee were present Rajendra Singh strongly felt that the BJP had done extremely well and so should take full advantage of the anti-Congress mandate The RSS also urged the BJP to push all the controversial issues—the Ram temple at Ayodhya, the Uniform Civil Code and the abolition of Article 370—to the background

The RSS' objective was not merely to see the BJP capture power but also to effect a total change in the social system and the individual Indian Many point out that the RSS, despite its ideological purity, has always pushed the BJP towards power

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Many a time the RSS' advice has not been well received in the BJP As reported in *The Times of India* (May 14, 1996) the BJP Treasurer, Ved Prakash Goel, is said to have added

> There is no doubt that the goal of the RSS and BJP are the same But it does not mean that our paths are to be identical

The BJP leaders are often called for discussions by the RSS as it happened on November 20, 1996 when all the BJP MPs from UP were summoned to the RSS headquarters in Delhi where the RSS Joint General Secretary, Sudarshan, briefed them on the RSS' expectations from them

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Even though the BJP has grown more autonomous and independent than the Jan Sangh, there is still no revolutionary transformation in the relationship between the RSS and the BJP The BJP despite its growth is still dependent on the RSS to give it guidance on various issues The RSS too tries to keep its control over it by sending *pracharaks* to hold key posts in the BJP

Compared to the RSS which has nearly 25 lakh members, the BJP has shot up in its membership growth to nearly 100 lakhs Even in the BJP's decision-making bodies there is a decrease in the number of RSS *swayamsevaks* But in the Jan Sangh about 90 per cent of them had an RSS background even in 1971

The BJP and the RSS have certain basic differences and aspirations precisely because the BJP is a political party whereas the RSS is a social organisation Naturally the BJP has certain constraints which the RSS does not have Political compulsions and democratic polity force it to be more practical and liberal So the BJP is forced to be tolerant of the pluralistic forces of society, which leads to it being moderate on every issue Signs of strains between the RSS and the BJP could be found in Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, MP, Rajasthan and Maharashtra Rana and Waghela were critical of the interference of the RSS and the VHP in the party affairs

What is more, the RSS has approved the VHP's aggressive movement to liberate Krishna Janmabhoomi in Mathura as well as Kashi but the BJP has not been very happy with this agenda of the VHP, which wants the BJP to support the stir

These apart, many *pracharaks* who joined the BJP have changed and do not stick to the austere ways of the RSS As far as the earlier sense of morality and discipline is concerned, there is the absence of it in the BJP Moreover, the RSS itself is led by a collective leadership including H V Sheshadri, K S Sudarshan besides Rajendra Singh, and this has led to the absence of a centralised direction

Thus the relationship between the BJP and the RSS is a delicate one In case the BJP comes to power at the Centre and the RSS alongwith the VHP continues to hold the hard line position making the BJP difficult to carry on its work, there is a possibility of the BJP cutting itself off from the RSS and turning into any other political party And then the RSS may try to support other parties which appear to toe its line Otherwise there is also the chance that the RSS may change its attitude and completely get enmeshed in politics by sending a large number of *pracharaks* to key posts and thus holding the remote control Whatever might happen in future depends on many factors To get an absolute majority in the Lok Sabha by itself is a difficult task for the BJP due to the complexity of the Indian society as well as its pluralism ■

Voluntary Disclosure Scheme (1997) and Black Money

RUDDAR DATT

The Finance Minister, P Chidambaram, while presenting the 1997-98 Budget, announced a Voluntary Disclosure Scheme (VDS). The Finance Minister observed in this connection After balancing the economic and ethical arguments for harnessing black money, the time is opportune to introduce a Voluntary Disclosure Scheme The scheme is very simple Irrespective of the year or nature of the source of funds, the amount disclosed either as cash, securities or assets, whether held in India or abroad, would be charged to tax at 30 per cent for individuals and 35 per cent for corporations Total immunity would be granted for any action under the scheme under the Income Tax, Wealth Tax Acts and FERA

The demonetisation attempted in 1946 yielded barely a tax revenue of Rs 9 crores Several attempts were made in the form of voluntary disclosure schemes (VDS) thereafter The VDS (1951) provided a tax collection of only Rs 10 9 crores and thus was considered a flop The government again attempted VDS in 1965 in two phases Although 1.16 lakh tax assessees declared an income of Rs 197 crores, yet the revenue yield was a meagre Rs 50 crores Again another Voluntary Disclosure of Income and Wealth Scheme was attempted in 1976, but both the schemes taken together yielded a tax revenue of Rs 257 crores The Special Bearer Bonds Scheme of 1981 and the Voluntary Disclosure Scheme of 1985 were amnesty schemes under different names but their objective was the same, that is, to unearth black money The Special Bearer Bonds Scheme yielded Rs 964 crores of revenue, while the VDS of 1985 which remained in operation for 17 months from November 1985 to March 1987 yielded barely Rs 459 crores as tax revenue both in the form of income tax and wealth tax

The futility of launching amnesty schemes or VDS schemes becomes evident when it is realised that the amount of black money estimated by the Parliament's Standing Committee on Finance and Black Money for the year 1994-95 was of the order of Rs 3,00,000 crores (at 1980-81 prices) or Rs 11,00,000 crores at current prices This implies that voluntary disclosure schemes could unearth only the tip of the iceberg, but the repetition of such schemes breeds a sense of frustration among honest taxpayers It leads to a general feeling that non-compliance of tax laws can be indulged in with impunity and periodically cleared through VDS Our disrespect for law is the outcome

The author, a well-known economist, is the retired Principal, School of Correspondence Courses, University of Delhi He was the President of the Indian Economic Association (1991) and the President of the Indian Society of Labour Economics (1991) for a small revenue gain which can otherwise be achieved by plugging up the loopholes in tax laws

TABLE 1
Declarations Under Various VDS Schemes

	Schemes	No of Cases	Incomes Declared (Rs crores)	Tax Collected (Rs crores)
1	VDS 1951	20,912	70 2	10 9
2	VDS 1965	1,16,227	197 2	50 3
3	VDS 1976	2,45,570	746 1 •	249 0
		13,422	844 7 ••	7 7
4	Special Bearer Bonds (1981)			964 3
5	VDS 1985 #	15,39,987 •	2940 4	388 0
		5,36,843 ••	7838 0	70 8
	Total (1 to 5)	19,22,696 • 5,40,265 ••	3953 8 8682 7	698 2 78 5
6	VDIS 1997	4,66,031	33,000	10,500

# The Scheme was in operation for 17 months from November 1985 to March 1987
• For Income Tax
•• For Wealth Tax
Source Ministry of Finance, Government of India

The Voluntary Disclosure Scheme (1997), which was extensively advertised, yielded tax revenue of Rs 10,500 crores—an unprecendented revenue gain from any VDS launched since our independence A record 4 66 lakh persons or corporations made disclosures of income amounting to over Rs 33,000 crores which implied large per unit disclosures this time by individuals as well as corporations

The Finance Minister, P Chidambaram, is very happy that he will be in a position to restrain the Budget deficit below 4 5 per cent of GDP The VDIS (1997) used both the carrot and the stick to persuade tax evaders to disclose income The carrot was dangled in the advertisements by the slogan 'pay 30 per cent tax to have 100 per cent peace of mind' There was also the stick which was being brandished that if you don't pay 30 per cent tax now, you will have to pay 300 per cent penalty later The result of this double-edged approach was that during the last fortnight ending on December 31, 1997, there was mad rush for disclosures as time was running out for tax evaders to take advantage of this so-called 'last chance'

It is a matter of real satisfaction for the Revenue Secretary, N K Singh, that whereas all the VDS schemes since independence yielded a total revenue of Rs 777 crores, the VDIS (1997) has brought a total tax revenue of Rs 10,500 crores The lower tax rate and the promise to keep the particulars of the declarant as secret persuaded a large number of tax evaders to take advantage of the scheme In that sense the efforts of the government need two cheers

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But there is no need to be over-jubilant, because as against the total black money of Rs 11,00,000 crores, merely Rs 33,000 crores, that is, three per cent, has been coughed out by tax evaders In other words, the VDIS (1997) has not been able to make a serious dent in the parallel economy Basically, the objective of the scheme was to garner immediate tax revenue and the long-term task of reform in tax policy and administration still remains unattended The government has again to brandish the big stick to force tax evaders to cough out more P Chidambaram has decided in the first instance to come down heavily on owners of cellular phones and farm houses

In a country of over 930 million, only 12 million are assessed for income tax and only about 12,000 assessees are in the income tax bracket of Rs 10 lakhs and above Adding another 0 47 million to the pool of 12 million tax assessees is welcome, but still quite a large number are outside the tax net Moreover, it is not certain whether those who have declared unaccounted income have done it fully and finally, or whether they have only made a tactical move to be listed among those who have acted in accordance with the advice of the government Dr Kamal Nayan Kabra is right when he asserts

> A litmus test for it would be to demand a declaration on oath that their disclosures are full and final, leaving them with no 'black' money—a declaration attracting the provisions of perjury if proved false

But the government does not want to be hard on those who have made voluntary disclosures It is also doubtful whether the 4 66 lakh persons who have made disclosures are new tax payers It is more likely that persons under-reporting incomes earlier have unloaded a part of the black money taking advantage of the VDIS Thus, it is not a case of widening of tax net as made out by the government, but a case of tax deepening But whatever may be the truth, the government has been able to get additional revenue

True, keeping the maximum tax rate at 30 per cent, the government was able to garner Rs 10,000 crores from tax evaders But given the widespread growth of black money, this is really the tip of the iceberg The basic question is Should the government now act against tax-dodgers with an iron fist so that the phenomenon of black money can be contained within reasonable limits, and black money operators do not run what is popularly described as 'parallel economy'?

The honest taxpayers belonging to the salaried class did get some relief by a reduction in tax, but the government knew it fully well that with the implementation of the Fifth Pay Commission Report, the salaried class will have to pay more tax. In this way, the loss due to reduction of high tax rates would be compensated by the additional tax revenue arising from higher pay packets. But the phenomenon of 'black economy' or 'parallel economy' remaining more or less intact, the real question is to follow a tax policy in the post-VDIS period which targets the business classes through strong administrative measures to pay the tax due to the governemnt. Chidambaram intends to make a beginning, but with political instability at the Centre this task will have to be pursued by the new government after March 1998.

The major weakness of the Governemnt of India has been to follow a weak-kneed policy towards tax evaders, who have been the chief financiers during the elections. Unless a continuous and sustained pressure is built on tax evaders, the chances of making a serious impact on the black economy do not seem to be bright.

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IN this connection, some suggestions have been made. First, the imposition of a uniform rate of 35 per cent corporation tax on all companies needs to be reviewed. It would be prudent to introduce a slab system and charge only 15 per cent on smaller companies upto a profit of Rs 50,000. The slab should be increased further and three or four slabs be made, before the maximum marginal rate of 35 per cent is charged.

TABLE 2

Maximum Marginal Rate of Personal Income Tax, 1994

Country	*per cent*	*Country*	*per cent*
India	30.0 •	China	45.0
Denmark	65.0	South Korea	45.0
France	56.8	UK	40.0
Germany	53.0	Indonesia	35.0
Sweden	50.0	Brazil	35.0
Japan	50.0	Mexico	30.0
Egypt	48.0	Russia	30.0
USA	47.5	Singapore	30.0

• For 1997-98

Source Tata Services Ltd., Statistical Outline of India (1996-97)

Secondly, the VDIS had proved that reasonable tax rates lead to better compliance and this principle should be extended to excise duty, sales tax and stamp duty as well. This will help to plug the generation of black money via production and trade channels. If this policy is pursued, a big dent would be made in checking the growth of black money year after year.

Thirdly, the system of discretionary controls which has been dismantled in some sectors after the liberalisation phase started in 1991, should now be extended to other sectors. This will also have a salutary effect in plugging the generation of black money.

Fourthly, it is now being suggested that the exemption limit be increased to Rs 1,00,000 and the minimum tax rate of 10 per cent should become applicable thereafter. It is also suggested that maximum marginal rate of tax should apply only after an income level of Rs 5,00,000. It would be more desirable to work out the financial implications of these suggestions because some economists are of the view that maximum marginal rate of 30 per cent is even lower than the corresponding rates prevailing in other countries.

Chidambaram has ruled out any further reduction in the tax rate. Moreover, taking advantage of certain exemptions, the effective rate of tax is even now in the range of 25 per cent for higher income earners. It would be, therefore, desirable to stabilise the present rates and impress upon the tax evaders the futility of evading such low level of tax rate and inviting penalties. A sustained pressure has the potential of developing a new culture among the taxpayers to pay reasonable tax and have peace of mind.

Lastly, it would be more desirable to have lower penalties. To speak of a penalty of 300 per cent only encourages the taxpayers to bribe the officials in the Income Tax Department so as to save them from the penal rates. In no case, should the penalty be more than 100 per cent. It is ironical that the tax administration became more friendly to tax evaders and has been cajoling them to come forward and declare unaccounted income. But it would be much more desirable if the same friendly approach is adopted towards honest taxpayers who are harassed by the Income Tax Department even on flimsy grounds. Let the system learn to be much more friendly to the honest than the dishonest.

All these measures should create an atmosphere of friendliness with the officials of tax administration, so that taxpayers develop more confidence in the officials. This can help to unearth black money still further. ■

Politicians and Corruption

SATYAPAL DANG

Suneeta Chahar in her article "Why should'nt Politicians be Corrupt?" (*The Tribune*, January 25, 1998—Sunday Reading) puts forward the thesis that politicians cannot but be corrupt, that it is futile to expect them to be honest, politicians everywhere are corrupt "even in the developed countries like America (and) the UK" She, therefore, thinks that "our energies and attention" should not be wasted in fighting the corruption of politicians Instead, these should be concentrated on how to strengthen those institutions which act as the watchdog of public interest According to the writer, primarily it is the bureaucracy which is capable of resisting the corrupt politicians and unfortunately in India unlike in America the bureaucracy in our country "the so-called steel-frame has become malleable even from the softest of kneading by the politicians" The bureaucracy in the USA fights the corruption of politicians, we are told

As I am unable to agree with Chahar, I proceed to examine her reasoning According to her, it is a "fallacy to confuse politics with selfless service"

> Politics by definition is for power And there cannot be any power without money The two go hand-in-hand—money begets power and power generates money The aspiring politicians have not only to win the goodwill of the constituents not once but repeatedly This is turn requires him to indulge in extensive PR (public relations) The expense of PR even at the ward level is such that even a reasonably wealthy man will not be able to sustain it if he does not indulge in corrupt practices

I believe that all those who participated in the struggle for ending the British imperialist rule in India too were "politicians" They included many who willingly and voluntarily sacrificed their lives for the sake of India's freedom Obviously for these Indians whose memories we cherish, politics by definition was not "for power" Let us also recall that there were others who made very great sacrifices, suffered very great hardships but were fortunate not to have died when India became free Amongst them were stalwarts like Sohan Singh Josh, Aruna Asaf Ali, E M S Namboodripad, C Rajeswara Rao, Achutha Menon and many others

They could have been in power if they wanted to, almost immediately after India became free But they did not Instead, they decided to continue the fight, now for establishing a just society in a developed India in which no Indian would be poor, all would have *roti, rozi* and *makan* and also guaranteed education and health facilities, and in which there would be equal opportunities for all individuals to develop If later some of these leaders took power at the State level, as in Kerala and West Bengal, it was as a part of this struggle And they were able to prove wrong the thesis that "power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely" Achutha Menon and E M S Namboodripad, long time Chief Ministers of Kerala, may be the most outstanding examples of such politicians, but the list of the likes of them is not very short I am sure that the names of Indrajit Gupta and Chaturanan Mishra, Ministers at the Centre, will also be in this list

Chahar argues

> Even a cup of tea offered by him (a legislator) costs him several lakhs of rupees year after year And he does not have the money

According to her, what he gets as salary and allowances and later as pensions is extremely inadequate The presumption that all voters want to be entertained by their MPs and MLAs is altogether false I also know of legislators who do not take any money for their elections and for the incentive PR from smugglers, criminals, known black marketeers, corrupt bureaucrats, etc etc and who don't buy votes with the help of liquor and/or money in one form or another, maybe cash or Dharamsala or any other facility like that I also know that in this category there are legislators whose entire election expenses are incurred by their party sections of which raise money from the common people, spend much less than the amounts raised thereby saving money for their day-to-day work in the service of the people There are in this category legislators who have not recommended a single person for a job and have not given any job to a single person as a matter of nepotism and favouritism even when holding the Minister's office

True, the number of such legislators and Ministers is now not large But behind and with them are innumerable equally and even more selfless persons without whom they would not reach the position that they have reached Chahar has talked about big PR expenses even at the ward level and hence corruption at that level too I know of Sarpanches even today who did not indulge in such expenses

The author, a nationally acclaimed CPI leader of Punjab, is currently among the handful of politicians known for their honesty and integrity and who have not become corrupt I know of a President of a Municipal Committee who told a voter of his

> Your son was not appointed because he was not entitled to as per rules If you voted for me to get undue favours, please don't vote for me in the next elections

I also know that this voter later went to the President of the Committee and apologised He was also his supporter in the next elections I know of Vice-President of a Municipal Committee who was a honest to the core and who had no mercy for the corrupt employees.

No, it is not correct that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely What is correct is that "power *tends* to corrupt and absolute power *tends* to corrupt absolutely" However, it is also correct that there are many who can successfully resist this tendency even when in power The Indian youth held aloft the banner of self-sacrifice when it fought for Indian freedom. Even today, many young people can be persuaded to join politics not for making money, not to run away from it because it has become dirty but to join it with determination and brooms to sweep off the dirt But this needs parties which stand for a just society because that alone can generate idealism of the type which the "goal of Indian freedom" did when the British ruled this great country of ours

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LET us now come to the second part of the thesis under discussion It is correct that common people in the USA and some other developed countries don't suffer much and to the extent Indian people have to suffer due to ground level corruption I also agree that in India the bureaucracy has become very corrupt There was a time when only a small minority of the IAS cadres were corrupt Now only a microsposic minority of them are not corrupt. However, I don't think that bureaucrats in the USA and Britain are made of some special mould when their politicians are as bad as the Indian politicians It needs to be pointed out that Suneeta Chahar does not note the fact that it is the ruling politicians of the bourgeois parties who are responsible for the moral downfall of the Indian bureaucracy I have seen this with my own eyes

N N Vohra who retired as the Home Secretary to the Government of India was once the Secretary to Government of Punjab's Local Government Department His Minister (Congress) wanted him to make a wrong recommendation He did not The Minister incited a junior officer to insult Vohra It was after this that Vohra got himself shifted to Delhi Many other young upright IAS officers coming from the middle classes and having a lot of idealism and desire to build a new India remained upright for sometime but not to the end. Some were allured into the wrong path Others were coerced into it Some others needed both allurement as well as insults and even coercion to become corrupt There are upright IAS officers in Punjab even now but hardly any who is willing to fight corruption at any level, higher or even lower than his own If the Indian ruling politicians can do this to the IAS, surely the powerful American politicians can also do this If really they have not been able to do so, the reason for that may not be that American bureaucrats are inherently superior to our bureaucracy, which they are not It may be the result of stronger public opinion and the awareness of and readiness on the part of the people to fight corruption at all levels Also, it is not correct that there is no corruption in the bureaucracy in the developed countries I remember the big uproar when a whole shipful of American wheat sent to India was of substandard quality and almost unfit for human consumption Surely some big people must have been involved and not merely inspectors-level officials

Last but not the least, Suneeta Chahar speaks of "the great debate on corruption". Actually there is only lot of talk of corruption at the top levels Corrupt politicians speak loudly about the corruption of others while pretending to be honest-to-the-core themselves. Leaders of non-Left parties talk of some other parties being totally corrupt but indulge in big corruption themselves and even if not totally corrupt they do nothing to fight corruption in their own parties "Talk against corruption" is not meant to fight corruption but to use the weapon against your political rivals Therefore, corruption is corruption when it is done by others and not yourself

Elimination of corruption is an extremely difficult task Organised public opinion together with suitable laws can lead to its considerable reduction in production provided a consistent struggle against it is launched The struggle has to be at all levels—against corruption at high levels as well as ground levels with an attitude of no-mercy against the corrupt Of course, punishment for every corrupt practice should not be the extreme one—dismissal or hanging as the case may be Where punishment combined with some other steps can lead to reformation, it should not be harsh Where reform is not possible, punishment must be harsh dismissal, prosecution and conviction together with confiscation of ill-gotten wealth, etc etc Who can lead this fight? Not anti-corruption forums set up by the corrupt people to hide their own corruption There are many of that type Not political parties whose leaders at different levels regard politics as a profession which gives the maximum rate of profit

The struggle against corruption can be led successfully only by

1 The Left parties, provided they have organisational mechanisms to nip in the bud tendencies of their own leaders and cadres to go corrupt They should have control commissions not subordinate to the executive and with as much powers as the Supreme Court and High Courts have in our system of parliamentary democracy In the absence of such a mechanism, corruption will be there to some extent even in the Left parties

2 Anti-corrupton forums, membership of which is open only to those who are really upright and honest and have a will to fight a prolonged struggle against corruption both in general and against every specific act of corruption that comes to their notice

One thing more All bribe-takers and all bribe-givers should not be treated as equally guilty Those who are forced to give bribes or to resort to some corrupt practice to get even what is their right belong to a category different from persons who give bribes to get big contracts, big orders, etc The latter should be put in the same category as the bribe-takers However, there should not be any distinction between corruption at the top level and corruption at the ground level It is wrong to think that the main reason for corruption is due to low wages/incomes Corrupt employees at the lower levels take bribes only to enhance their salaries I think there are meter-readers whose salary may be Rs 5000-6000 per month but whose total income per month from the job is Rs 50,000 per month or more What breeds and immensly strengthens corruption is consumerism To fight corruption, therefore, it is necessary also to fight consumerism That, however, should be the subject-matter of another article ■

Ramblings on "Minor Foibles"

APROPOS OF PRIME MINISTER GUJRAL

R.M. PAL

Going by the kind of invectives used by distinguished chief editors/editors in the newspapers these days it would appear that while journalism is literature in a hurry literature itself is invective at its worst As students, we were taught that the use of invective is a social foible, today it is no longer so. It is central to a new style of editorial English

For reasons of space I'd limit myself to a couple of instances From day one when I K Gujral assumed the office of the Prime Minister, the chief editor (CE) of a national daily (which I read by habit), began to use the choicest "epithets" for him According to him, Gujral is "one-man demolition brigade" in the ranks of the United Front "to achieve disrespectful ends", he is "unscrupulous", he is a man "without a sense of shame", he is a "dangerous man", and so on Obviously the CE is very angry with Gujral, and one can be sure that the CE has his good reasons into which I don't wish to pry since, by habit, I like to maintain a safe distance from feuds amongst politicians and between politicians and their seemingly "scientific analysts", and also for the reason that political parties are unnecessary evils in our country and have persistently stood in the way of the growth of a decentralised democratic system

The CE is convinced that a liberal use of such "epithets"—we were taught that the use of adjectives in the English language is a dangerous thing Charles Lamb being one of the very few exceptions—is the only way to make a point or to give expression to his "anguish" For example, once when the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) leaders made critical comments about Gandhiji, the CE used the following "epithets" to characterise them the BSP is a pack of wolves, shameless, loud-mouthed gadflies, intellectually retarded, suffer from inferiority complex, street ruffians, devoid of commonsense, hypocrites, the loud and insignificant insects, and so on

Gandhiji must have turned in his samadhi out of both shame and anger since he cannot come back to life to reply to the CE like what he did, for example, in the thirties when he wrote

> Dr Ambedkar has every right to be bitter That he does not break our heads is an act of self-restraint on his part He has had to suffer humiliations and insults which should make any one of us bitter and resentful Had I been in his place, I would have been as angry

Aren't these apt examples of invective being literature in a hurry? In any case, one can't but admire the CE's astounding ability to inveigh against people whom he does not like or does not agree with

Another example of invective and journalism used interchangeably by journalists today One senior

The author is a former Principal, Rajdhani College, University of Delhi He currently edits the PUCL Bulletin editor of a national daily got so angry with the Supreme Court judges that he thundered

> Some recent strictures passed by the Supreme Court against the law-enforcing agencies in Punjab suggest that the learned judges of the nation's apex juridical authority may be in need of psychiatric counselling

Once a senior editor of a popular periodical described VP Singh, when he was the Prime Minister, as "Machiavellian" (and many other similar "epithets"), of course, without giving any instances (A former academic and colleague of mine, I happened to meet him one day and asked the meaning of the word, Machiavellian—he changed the topic!) Another CE of a national daily described VP. Singh, again when he was the Prime Minister, that he was "another Hitler in the making" because he introduced reservation for the OBCs! In a discussion session one of them raised the question of truth and asked "What is truth?" several times, but, like Nero, never once waited for the answer!

These gems of literature remind one of an incident in which a young aspirant for a journaist's job was politely asked by Lord Morley about his qualification Pat came the reply he excelled in invective! The CE and the senior editors referred to above must forgive me if I got this impression about them

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To get back to Prime Minister Gujral in the context of his failures/action referred to by the CE In a long Doordarshan interview sometime back, Gujral while replying to a number of questions and criticisms—quite a few valid criticisms—made an un-Indian, but pleasant to hear, observation, and also refreshing for a change, namely, that he did not seek the office of the Prime Minister nor is he going to do so in the future There are some, he said, who offered themselves for the job. [One of them has been maintaining for years now that he is the only person in the country who is competent to hold the office of the Prime Minister! Once again he is in the field] Gujral does not offer himself; he said, and one is inclined to believe that at least in this respect he is un-Indian In reply to another question he said that any Prime Ministerial aspirant must be a secular person, and must have a thorough knowledge of Indian secularism. True, but neither the interviewer nor the PM elaborated on what was meant by secularism and how Indian secularism was different from other varieties Also, a man of his background and experience ought to have added that a basic knowledge of Indian sociology (apart from Indian history)—given the extreme complexities of Indian society and life—is a must

The significant achievements of Gujral as the External Affairs Minister—and a very tragic failure on the part of the United Front Government led by him and earlier by Deve Gowda—were not raised in the interview, nor are these mentioned in the media Obviously, they are neither relevant nor important for they concern the common man and woman of the country, not the middle class intelligentsia Most of our rulers have almost always wanted to solve India's problems and disputes with her neighbours by pursuing the policy of establishing India's hegemony in the region The fact remains that we have too many arrogant people both in the foreign service and among ruling politicians, who betray lack of intellectual equipment, and one cannot expect sound judgment from such people Gujral has been different from such people and pursued a different policy Accord with India's immediate neighbours, most importantly Bangladesh, with whom our relations had soured during the last 16/17 years, must be hailed as a significant contribution That Gujral was able to reach an agreement with Bangladesh, and which Bangladesh itself has hailed as a unique achievement, in spite of West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu's known stand on the water sharing issue, deserves to be acknowledged by all—his foes and friends For too long a period India has been obsessed with its relationship with the big countries of the West at the cost of good neighbourliness with its immediate neighbours, and for too long a period successive governments in India forget the textbook knowledge of foreign relations being determined by internal conditions and realities It seems Gujral has revived this old textbook formulation

One wishes he took a bolder step with regard to Pakistan Friendship with Pakistan will bring tremendous relief to the common man and woman in our country

One of the major failures, hardly referred to by critics, relates to the non-implemention of the provision of Article 45 of the Constitution (compulsory primary education) In his August 15, 1997 speech from the Red Fort he did, however, announce his agenda in which he put universal primary education, the girl child, and gender equality first in the list of priorities It was refreshing to hear Gujral propounding that no development is possible without introducing universal primary education And also refreshing to recollect is the fact that he was the first Prime Minister to have announced this agenda of priorities in his independence day pronouncement from the Red Fort But like the average Indian politician, did he also mean, when he made the announcement, that the operative part of the pious sentiments are not meant seriously?

Random Thoughts

After all, man is part of creation and the Creator has the last laugh. The little ego, supported by man's native intelligence, has brought him to the level of *homo sapiens*. Let him never forget that.

Saddam Hussain may appear to be a mad man resisting inspection of his war wares by the UN (US), Bill Clinton may appear great saying that invasion is imminent on behalf of humanity, and humanity sits with crossed hands since the USA is the strongest nation today in a unipolar world.

Let no one mistake that ultimately the Creator will have his last laugh. Legends and history have proved this on many occasions. Ram has always succeeded against Ravan. The question now is who is Ram? Is it Clinton? What spiritual morality does he boast of? Is he the second Mahatma?

Violence will breed large scale destruction of innocent civilians. Are Iraqi civilians to be decimated for the fault of a Saddam Hussain? Maybe Clinton believes he is saving Americans and humanity if he is able to destroy the chemical and biological munitions which Saddam is supposed to possess. But does Clinton's base rest on his superior morality or spirituality? In the latter case he would avoid unnecessary bloodshed. Long ago Martin Luther said 'We have guided missiles and misguided men', if my memory is correct. Before Clinton shows fisticuffs, he should consult the wise men everywhere. Or, listen to his conscience if he is a true Christian.

K. Chandramouli

Nobody suggests that compulsory primary education could be accomplished in six months time, but the steps taken by the Human Resources Development Ministry of his government do not indicate that the government was at all serious about this all important social welfare programme. The only "contribution" made by the United Front Government was to introduce a Bill to make primary education a fundamental right and fundamental duty! The fact, however, remains that it was already made a fundamental right by a Supreme Court judgment in 1993, and legislation on the subject was not strictly necessary. The fundamental duty aspect amounts to playing a fraud, to put it mildly, on the part of the government and specially the HRD Ministry. The operative part of this provision is that both, violation of fundamental right (by the state) and violation of fundamental duty (by the parents), are cognisable offences. Has the state ever been punished for violating fundamental rights, and in this case, provision of Article 45 which was made a fundamental right by the Supreme Court in 1993?

Another failure, which too has not been referred to by any analyst and critic, refers to transparency in matters relating to human rights. Soon after Gujral became the External Affairs Minister, he assured activists that he would soon permit the Amnesty International to visit the State of Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, and other parts. (As is known, the Amnesty International does not send any team as tourist as do some other international groups.) It is sad and unfortunate that Gujral has not done this. One fails to understand why Gujral and his colleagues should think that heavens would fall if the Amnesty International is permitted to visit various places in the country? Or, is it that Gujral was not able to bring round the Army authorities who are known to be against permitting any human rights groups from abroad? Gujral, more than anyone else, knows that the world today is a big village, and nothing can be kept a secret. Democratic culture and transparency, one should have thought, enhance the prestige of a practising democracy.

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I may refer to an incident revolving round Gujral, for whatever it is worth. The Independent Initiative, an NGO founded by Justice Krishna Iyer, Justice Rajindar Sachar, Professor Rajni Kothari and others, deputed me to observe the polling in the Patna parliamentary constituency on May 20, 1991. I undertook the task with trepidation because the then Chief Election Commissioner, T.N. Seshan, had already forecast a bloodbath on the election day in Patna. In fact it was the dire prediction of the all-knowing Seshan which prompted the Initiative to opt for Patna for observation. (The CEC countermanded the election even though both the Congress and BJP leaders and workers had demanded repoll only in 50/60 booths and did not ask for countermanding the election as a whole. Incidentally, it was a scoop of sorts, for I reported that the CEC had countermanded the election even before he received the report from the Election Officer at Patna or from his own team of observers! It was published in the newspapers of May 22.) On my return journey on May 21 Gujral, who was the Janta Dal candidate from the Patna constituency and I sat side by side in the plane. I recognised him from his beard—I had not seen him in person before! From the badge I put on, he came to know of my identity. We talked about the "weather", never once during the journey did he ask me anything about my findings. Well, a gentleman is one who does not embarrass you nor does he inflict pain on you! ■

SINO-US DEFENCE TIES

William Cohen's recent visit to Beijing

SWARAN SINGH

Following their famous Presidential summit in October last year, the Sino-US defence ties have clearly picked up momentum In fact this new spurt towards evolving interaction between their defence establishments can be traced back to the third summit between President Jiang Zemin and Bill Clinton in Manila in November 1996 This was the first occasion when the two leaders had finalised the broad principles for further growth of their post-Cold War bilateral relations These interactions between their military establishments have witnessed a marked increase ever since Soon after this summit, in December 1996 itself, China's Defence Minister, Chi Haotian, had become the highest military dignitary to visit the United States since 1989 Following this China's Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Kui Fulin, another Deputy Chief, Wu Quanxu, Chief of the PLA General Staff, Fu Quanyou, and Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Lt Gen Xiong Guangkai, visited the United States respectively in February, July, August and December 1997 From the US side, Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, John Shalikashvili, Commander-in-Chief of the US Pacific Fleet, Dennis Reimer, Chief of Naval Operations, Jay Johnson, and Commander-in-Chief of US Pacific Command, Joseph Prueher, reciprocated these visits last year which formed the backdrop to Secretary Cohen's visit to Beijing in January this year It is in this context that one has to examine the fallout of the US Defence Secretary, William Cohen's recent tour of East Asia where he visited Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, China, Japan and South Korea in that order

The immediate backdrop to his maiden sojourn to this region was provided by the continuing currency crises in East Asia which, from Washington's point of view, seemed to tilt the regional strategic balance in favour of Beijing To begin with these currency crises have provided China a unique opportunity to play an assertive role in this well-known American bastion As regards the United States, these crises have resulted in a two-fold problem of (a) declining capacity for burden-sharing, and (b) decline in orders for the US defence firms which had been kept well oiled by these East Asian tigers following the general decline in defence expenditures since the end of the Cold War (when these had peaked) Countries like Japan and South Korea, on the other hand, have raised serious question-marks on the existing burden-sharing arrangements regarding the longstanding US troop deployments Similarly, this financial turmoil has also spurred various East Asian to delay or cancel the arms deals that had helped keep US weapon-makers busy at the time when procurements by other major powers (including Pentagon) have tumbled With East Asian defence allocations doubling in the last seven years, this has set off a scramble for new deals amongst weapon-exporting countries Purchases by these Asian nations from American companies, which accounted for about 10 per cent of US arms exports a decade ago, last year made up about 25 per cent of the $ 16 billion in weapons that US manufacturers sold abroad

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It is this changed new context that provided the background and determined the broad agenda of the US Defence Secretary, William Cohen's recent trip And here, apart from reiterating the American commitment to maintaining Asian peace and stability and stressing on US defence arrangements with its Asian allies, the high-point of Cohen's East Asian trip became his four-day visit to China which took place during January 17-20, 1998 In short, the visit provided a major boost to Sino-US defence ties and briefly the following five events marked Cohen's interactions in Beijing (i) signing of the Military Maritime Consultative Agreement, 1998, (ii) US obtaining specific assurances against China's missiles supplies to Iran, (iii) US delegation being allowed to visit to a secret air defence centre in Beijing, (iv) planning for increased interactions between their military establishments, (v) shift from stressing on China's human rights records to joint humanitarian efforts

First, concluding the process of evolving a mutually acceptable naval "rules-of-the-road" agreement that was broadly forged during President Jiang Zemin's visit to Washington last October, China's Defence Minister, Chi Haotian, and the US Defence Secretary, William Cohen, signed the Military Maritime Consultative Agreement which is the first such important defence cooperation document ever since their "Peace Pearl" programme of mid-1980s that was unilaterally rescinded by Washington following the Tiananmen Square incident of June 1989 This had brought their earlier honeymoon to an abrupt end though the US had by then emerged as China's single largest supplier of military equipment and technology transfers

Similarly, evolved in the backdrop of the Sino-US naval stand-off that had reached their nadir during the confrontation between a Chinese nuclear submarine and USS carrier *Kitty Hawk* at the Yellow Sea and later during Taiwan's Presidential elections in March 1996 when the US had dissipated two aircraft carriers warning China to keep of the Taiwan Straits, these new initiatives are aimed at streamlining mutual understanding between the two naval establishments To start with, these are expected to put in place protocols and communications between the two navies to avoid misunderstandings, miscalculations and mishaps which, in the long run, are expected to strengthen their broader framework of evolving confidence building measures (CBMs) between the People's Liberation Army and the Pentagon These new initiatives hold special significance considering China's new-found zeal for expanding its blue water capabilities that have lately emerged as the central pillar of its future power projections

Continuing the process of evolving CBMs that had been launched during their Presidential summit in Washington last October, the US Defence Secretary is said to have obtained assurances, this time in more specific terms, from the Chinese President as well as Chinese Defence Minister to the effect that China will not supply either missiles or missile technologies to Iran which, despite Teheran's new overtures, the US still continues to treat as its major adversary in the Persian Gulf region And here, the contribution of Cohen's recent visit to Beijing lies in the fact that going a step further than President Jiang Zemin's commitment last October, Secretary Cohen is said to have been assured that China will not supply even the contracts that are pending with Iran Also China has promised not be party to either any technology transfers or any other technical assistance to Teheran towards the upgrading of the latter's existing over-the-horizon missile capabilities

Supplies of these anti-ship cruise missiles C-801 and C-802 to Iran have been a major' irritant in China's relations with the United States According to the US officials, China is believed to have supplied between 100 to 200 of such land and sea-launched cruise missiles to Iran during the last four to seven years Speaking at China's Academy of Military Sciences in Beijing, Secretary Cohen explained how the US regards Iran as a major threat to it and others shipping in the Persian Gulf region He cautioned that China itself depended so heavily on the oil supplies from the Persian Gulf and that any disruption in shipping in this region will not only affect China's own economic performance but, in case it involved weapons exported by China, it will also adversely hit Sino-US rapprochement The Chinese side, however, did not seem very pleased with this veiled threat by Secretary Cohen and their Foreign Ministry spokesman asserted that China's weapons exports did not breach any law or procedure and that China was proud to be an ardent participant of the UN Arms Register He also said that China has been extremely responsible and there will be no change in China's weapons export policies Similarly, the Defence Minister, Chi Haotian, was also reported to having raised concerns about Washington's new defence arrangements with Japan and its recent attempts at courting the ex-Soviet republics

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As regards China, this visit by Cohen was also seen as a precursor to the forthcoming visit by President Bill Clinton who is expected to be in China some time later this year At least this appeared to have largely determined the tenor of the PLA's close-door meetings with the 57-member delegation led by Secretary Cohen and China's military appeared far too much willing to seek engagement with the Pentagon representatives This new openness and warmth was underscored by the PLA's unprecedented gesture of allowing Secretary Cohen and his 14-member team—which included the Commander of American Asia-Pacific forces, Joseph Prueher, and Assistant Secretary of State, Stanley Roth—to visit one of China's top secret military facilities which had remained undeclared until a fortnight before Cohen's visit This visit to a second-storey air-defence centre in Beijing was added to Cohen's programme only a week before his arrival at Beijing According to reports, this facility tracks thousands of aircraft in the region daily and can be used to coordinate defence by a number of regional centres against missile or air attacks At its core this air-defence command centre protects a 200-mile radius around the national capital region of Beijing Though the US officials described it as a mixture of the 1960s and 1980s technologies, this was the first such occasion when Americans were allowed to visit such a facility and therefore marked the high-point in the evolution of CBMs between the military establishments of both sides.

The same spirit also seems to have prevailed during Cohen's close-door meetings with President Jiang Zemin and Defence Minister Chi Haotian, where the two sides finalised the details for the next two years' programme on exchange of high-level visits For a change, the US Defence Secretary was not seen talking of China's human rights but asserted that the two sides have decided not to stress on their differences on issues like Taiwan The US military establishment instead discussed details of working out joint humanitarian efforts towards providing help to China's earthquake victims and a second military planeload of blanket for this purpose is expected to reach Beijing sometime later this month From the Chinese side as well, the official media seemed to exude confidence by the sudden openness about defence spending and strategic interests of China's military establishment The *China Daily* of January 18, 1998, for example, showed a rare glimpse of the PLA's vast commercial enterprise which has been one controversial source of China's military modernisation, figures on which remain very suspect to say the least It was reported that exports by 1400 military firms and research institutes had totalled $ 7 billion in 1997, half of which were said to be civilian products However, Secretary Cohen clarified that the US was not yet planning any weapon supplies to China though they remain keen to spearhead their defence cooperation in other related areas The PLA, on the other hand, appeared very keen to exploit this occasion to attract foreign investments and was seen as projecting its research strengths and mass production experience And here, as a curtain-raiser for the coming events, Cohen's visit to Beijing did highlight positive trends for the future of the emerging Sino-US axis

In fact, encouraged by the success of Cohen's trip to Beijing, the White House Administration is already contemplating lifting their 10-year old trade embargo against the People's Republic and an announcement to that effect is likely to be made during the US President's forthcoming visit to China Already, the United States recognises China as a major Asian power which the White House seeks to engage in order to manage Washington's continued military presence in the Asian theatre which is all set to emerge as the new epi-centre of world affairs in the coming years And here, considering that China remains most sensitive to any mention of political reforms, the US appears to be aiming their new-found zeal for engagement towards making China more transparent in security matters Otherwise, Cohen made it more than clear that Washington, at this stage, was not planning to sell any weapons or weapon technologies to Beijing And this being the broad outline of their short-term policy, the success of Cohen's recent trip to China surely portends positive trends for Sino-US defence ties ■

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BOOK REVIEW

Analysing the Christian Dalits' Right to Protective Discrimination

JOY JOSEPH

The Plight of Christian Dalits—A South Indian Case Study by Godwin Shiri, Asian Trading Corporation, Bangalore, 1997

Is there a match between the constitutional status and the social status of the Christian Dalits? Precisely this is the question for which Dr Godwin Shiri tries to find an answer through his research The Dalit Christians are denied a share in reservation because they have embraced a 'casteless' religion By doing so they have not gone one step forward but two steps backward The new religion has added one more heavy stone around their neck in addition to the various heavy stones gifted by the age-old caste system The indicators are well known Generally speaking, those have been the absolute negation of human dignity and freedom, and the Himalayan burden of menial and rigorous labour During the British rule the embrace of Christianity might have provided some immediate and temporary relief to their sufferings But the state of independent India of 50 years has really failed them The Christian Church of independent India too has thoroughly failed them In the eyes of the state they have become a people who at a time went after the concessions of a foreign imperial state and his/her religion For the general public, from Brahmin to their Dalit counterparts under the 'Hindu' system, they are a people who betrayed their origins and the ancestry and embraced an alien culture Dr Godwin Shiri in his book rather establishes this through the case studies of 44 villages in the Kurnool and Bellary districts of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka He argues that the current constitutional status has contributed to the deterioration of their position from bad to worse

In this review, the book is seen from the standpoint of the wider debates going on in the country regarding religious conversions, caste-based reservations and Dalit politics Also, the role of the Church establishment in the larger context How does this book contribute to this debate?

Social scientists generally see conversions as a kind of movement from one context to the other in search of some relief or release for their existential crises Conversion to Buddhism, Islam, Sikhism or Christianity doesn't mean that the converted is enabled to shed the untouchable past It depends on the attitude of both sides towards each other Unless there is an assertion from the weak, nothing changes

Generally, the Church is managed by priests and high-priests of relatively high-caste origins The Christian Church in India consists of two classes The Dalit Christians are a class in themselves constituting approximately 70 per cent of the Christian population They are mostly concentrated in the South Indian States of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu They are Christians converted from various untouchable castes from the length and breadth of the country Those converted from the upper castes are the ruling class of the Church Being part of the Christian Church they were only adding to their advantageous position in the society At least they have not lost anything by being part of the Church, but only gained

The charity programmes often propounded by the Church are nothing different from the universal approach of the rich to the poor practised for the alleviation of the guilt feeling of the rich rather than a genuine challenge to those forces that produce and maintain poverty The welfare measures of the Christian Church amount to nothing to match the magnitude of the sufferings of the Christian Dalits In this discussion, a conscious look at the model of Mother Teresa, whom the global media holds as the role model for the treatment of the problems of downtrodden and the poor, won't be out of place This is because the Church establishment also upholds the same view of the model of Mother Teresa very much More than this, there seems to be no other significant message the Church has got to convey to its own people or to the society at large The myth of Mother Teresa is very much symbolic of its message Not to ignore the worth of what the Church has done in the field of education, health-care and other services, or the contributions of those who tread a liberationary path and join the struggles of the poor and the downtrodden in different parts of the world but to say that the value-symbols propagated are absurdly outside the realm of human aspirations for a just society The Church had never conveyed anything to glorify the model of persons like Archbishop Oscar Romero of El Salvador, who was shot dead at the altar for his opposition to structural injustice, or Deitritch Bonhoffer, who was hanged by the Nazi regime of Germany, or Antony Murmu, the Christian (tribal) priest who was shot dead by the police in 1987 in Banji, Bihar These examples seem to have no connection with the prevailing scheme of things

Analysts who have viewed the myth of Mother Teresa critically, often termed it as a creation of the global media According to them, her glorifiers have removed her from the realms of history and laid her, during her life-time, in the realm of myths Without the role played by the global media, Mother Teresa would have been only one among the thousands of people who have been engaged in some form of selfless service for humanity The global media has never found the anti-capitalist movement of the Bengal region as an answer to the poverty and distress, and the colonialist exploitation behind the Bengal famines of 1943 wherein more than three million people died, or the 1770 famine wiping off almost one-third population of Bengal

The appropriateness of bringing Mother Teresa in this discussion is further explained in the description of an event that took place in Delhi in November 1995 Mother Teresa went and participated in a public programme demanding reservations for the Dalit Christians This was when the pro-reservation agitationists were making a desperate bid to press the Narasimha Rao Government to bring a legislation conceding their demand for a share in reservation The national media created a big furore Why did Mother Teresa, the role model for the whole humanity, poke her nose into a trivial matter like this? The same media had taken an openly aggressive position against the Mandal reservations in 1991. Their aversion to reservation might have been overflowing on this point also Anyway, Mother Teresa set the record straight by publicly declaring that she never sided with the pro-reservationists She only went for a prayer meeting

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THE official position of the Church towards the plight of the Christian Dalits is in no way different from this Nowhere in history has the Christian Church shown an example of sharing its resources, ensuring equal participation or reservation in the affairs of the Church Not even in words There has been no instance where the Church exhorted its wealthy members to share their wealth to save their Dalit fellow-believers from landlessness or poverty In the prayer meetings they take part together, some pieces of occasional charity are thrown to them, nothing more than that

Myths can serve different purposes Some myths have the potential to generate rebellions and creativity for transformation Some myths generate energy for further perpetration of the unjust status quo The myths often upheld by the Church belong to the second category Even the Christ, depicted in the Bible as subversive, gets painted to the constricted to symbolise obedience and suffering The Christian Dalits are more preyed upon by the overdose of these value-symbols, to become silent and obedient sufferers of this world indefinitely hoping for the other world

The charity enterprises of the Church are incapable of even touching their problems The Church cannot give them dignity It cannot give them land, it cannot give them jobs They also have to join their brethren of other religions to demand their rightful share in political power, economic resources, etc Reservation in jobs is only a token means to that That is also viewed as part of the charity and tokenism syndrome, which the Indian state is also not devoid of

Unless there is an assertion from the weak, nothing changes Even in some parts of Kerala and Tamil Nadu, where there are instances of continuous struggles and assertions by the Christian Dalits within the Church demanding various rights, the situation has not changed much The case study proves that it has not happened The Dalits have become an attached lot, often taken for granted and treated as lesser children The research methodology is the same as has been used in the classical social sciences research Data for various indicators like education, literacy, female literacy, income, jobs, nature of households were collected and assessed to prove that by any standards, they remain at the lowest rungs in further deterioration Clear and cogent evidences are laid bare extensively to substantiate this point

Though oppression and resistance are dialectical pairs, in the case of Dalits of untouchable origins the weight of oppression has been so overburdening that they were incapacitated to revolt much Though the Buddha and Bhakti traditions have thrown open, and at times veiled, challenges to the caste system, the untouchable people never had any chance to raise their head So any option coming their way might have been construed as a way to salvation These people who had their own diverse religious beliefs and patterns embraced one or the other of organised religions

Those of them who embraced Sikhism were granted reservation in 1956 based on an amendment of the Presidential order of 1950 through which the Scheduled Castes had been given that facility And

Years
in pursuit of
a vision

It was vision that made our freedom possible Then began a journey to fulfill that vision It's been uphill, all the way But we carried on And progressed Today, we can look back at the journey we've completed with pride And at the one ahead with hope

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those who embraced Buddhism were granted it in 1990 at the time of the birth centenary of Dr B R Ambedkar Much research has to go into what has really happened to people who embraced varied religions from low caste origins Many things might have happened But for the untouchables who have embraced Christianity, nothing much happened with regard to their caste status

Also, research should go into the earlier religious and cultural traditions of Dalits in India Have they got any relevance for a meaningful community living? In the book it has been said that the tradition of the Dalits were much more Unitarian and communitarian For, conversion as a social science category no relevance exists today Also, conversion as an option is also not relevant today for the Dalit people What becomes relevant is conversion to radical political consciousness

Various Options

Dr Godwin Shiri in the summing up chapter of the book gives various hints towards available and probable options for the State, the Church and the Dalit Christians To the State, he is able to convincingly present the case for the extension of reservation to the Dalit Christians The Church is challenged to undergo another conversion to the plight of Dalit Christians and give them their due share in resources, decision-making, pastoral care and so on And, he sees the best option for the Dalit Christians in joining the wider political struggle He says

> The general religious orientation which the Church promoted is quite overtly other-worldly and innerly spiritual However, it is interesting that in actuality the faith perceptions of Christian Dalits, whether it is of sin or salvation, the understanding of God or of Christian faith in general, are not overtly other-worldly or inner-spiritual but strongly existential This is due to the indescribable difficult living conditions they live in and the consequent struggle for survival What is more, their faith perceptions have a strong corporate ethical nature and an element of justice inherent in them This is remarkable and it has roots in their autochthonous culture (page 249)

This book points out that the path of struggle is the only option for the Christian Dalits

> Apparently a path of struggle appears to be the only way out under the present situation But does the community possess the much-needed potential and tools for such an eventuality, which would be a long drawn-out struggle for liberation, in intensifying, strengthening and sustaining it? (page 248)

The option of struggle both for rights and privileges within the Church and in the larger context of the political struggle as has been described in the book lacks clarity and assertion Within the Church also, there has been a stream of Dalit struggles and assertion in the past As the Church establishment rather patronised the Christian Dalits' struggle for reservation from the Indian state, the sharpness of the internal struggle has been lost This is one major pitfall in the path of those struggling for reservation It becomes a tool in the hands of the ruling class to neutralise the major struggles Dr Gopal Guru analyses the present trends around the issue of reservation from a a strong political angle He says that the globalisation-liberalisation processes have diluted the antipathy of the upper castes towards reservation for the lower castes The post-Mandal scenario of 1991 is not visible now The upper castes do not have to worry about the Dalits competing with them because there is no reservation in the private sector As a result, the social site of the reservation controversy rather shifted to the *"Dalit cheri"* The issue is being fought and contested violently today more than ever before within the Dalit community dividing it both vertically and horizontally It revolves round the demand for reservation within reservation, meaning distribution of the concession in proportion to the population of each segment of the Dalit community

> The inner dimension of the demand is democratic as it seeks parity with the so-called 'advanced Dalit sub-castes' at various levels of opportunity structures However, its outer expression is filled with jealousy mutual hatred and perpetual animosity which has pitted the Matangs against the Mahars in Maharashtra, the Madigas against the Malas in Andhra Pradesh and the Madigas against the Hollayars in North Karnataka and the Ad-Karnatakas against the Ad-Dravidas in Mysore Karnataka and the Hindu Dalits against the Christian Dalits in Kerala
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> The warring situation among the Dalit communities particularly in Andhra Pradesh, has been perceived by some social activists as a major setback to the tradition of solidarity among the Malas and the Madigas, who are said to have shared the common social concerns that radicalised Dalit politics collectively against repression by the anti-Dalit forces
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> Thus, the lag in the utilisation of the reservation benefits on the part of certain castes needs to be understood in terms of the socio-economic conditions that have given a historical lead to the Malas over the Madigas and to the Mahars over the Matangs or the Hollayars over the Madigas If one loses sight of this broader context, one is bound to create constantly hostile conditions among the Dalit groups which will when become vulnerable to parochial manipulations by the opportunist forces both from within the community and outside it (Dr Gopal Guru, *The Hindu,* December 2, 1997)

Adding to the impacts of globalisation, the whole project of semiticisation of Hinduism and the agenda of Hindu nationalism as a political force have contributed in a big way for the new cracks in solidarity of the Dalit people

At the level of political struggles, there are a number of visible options The Ambedkarite politics of the freedom movement era has given way to new political articulations and movements of diverse forces Starting from the Panthers, the Left, the extreme Left and the Bahujan Samaj Party are all very major players in the field The basic lacunae of the Ambedkarite politics was its over-focus on the reservations and concessions from the state From the level of political slogans it has gone down to the level of an overall method for some of the Dalit parties This deteriorated legacy is a crucial hurdle for the future of Dalit politics in the country The richness of the highly pluralistic streams of transformative politics is a point to anchor lot of hopes, but the danger of narrow divisions only perpetuate defeat The book raises a lot of challenging questions towards the Church establishment, leaves out the major challenges to be fought by the Christian Dalits within the Church and in the larger society joining hands with their Dalit brethren of other religions

The book convincingly argues out the case of the Christian Dalits' right to have protective discrimination. *To that extent, it is a path-breaking and eye-opening piece of research* ■

How the City devours its Children

REFLECTIONS ON THE NOVEMBER SCHOOL-BUS TRAGEDY

AMAR FAROOQUI

On November 18, 1997 an overcrowded school bus plunged into the Yamuna at Delhi, killing at least 30 children This grim tragedy highlights several problems These problems are largely the product of the urban disaster which Delhi is urbanisation gone berserk A very obvious cause of the tragedy is the almost total collapse of the city's transport network and the lack of any inclination on the part of the state to regulate the use of Delhi's road space in a manner that would ensure that the rights of the people to this space are not infringed. More on this later There is a deeper malady which underlies what occurred This is the failure to provide adequate schooling facilities in a rational and meaningful manner

That the post-colonial state in India has evaded its responsibility to initiate a literacy programme is generally recognised The experience of India's Capital underlines the low priority which the dominant sections of the Indian ruling class accord to the question of school education Delhi is the seat of the Government of India and has been administered all along by the Central Government, except for two relatively brief spells (in its present incarnation the State of Delhi, which has a dual administration, is about four years old) The resources at the command of the Central Government and its physical presence in the city presented a historic opportunity for intervention on the issue of school education Yet this is a job which the Indian state has been consistently unwilling to take up The problem has been further compounded by gradually rendering the municipal government ineffective and curtailing the role of local administrative bodies Elections to the Municipal Corporation of Delhi held earlier this year took place after a gap of nearly sixteen years This long gap has taken its toll, though even prior to the supersession of the corporation schools run by the Delhi Municipality could hardly have been regarded as models of good education The Corporation has had a role to play in setting up and maintaining schools but over the years 'corporation schools' have come to denote schools where poor quality education is imparted A process of differentiation has been steadily at work While the underprivileged have either no access to schools for their children or else have to send their children to government schools ('corporation schools'), the affluent have been offered the option of private schools ('public schools')[1] This option has increasingly become the favourite of the middle class as well so that on the one hand private schools have mushroomed while on the other there has been a further decline in the standards of government-run schools, schools for the poor This has reinforced the state's negligent attitude towards the fate of school education in Delhi Those who lament the interventionist policies of the Indian state in the so-called pre-liberalisation era might do well to remember that private enterprise in a key area like school education was a reality of life in Delhi long before liberalisation became fashionable It can hardly be overemphasised that sharp class differentiation promoted by the recent liberalisation has intensified the tendency towards rigid segregation, especially in

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a situation where the middle class and the elite have abandoned the government school model of primary and secondary education

The result is that a most irrational and inefficient Third World capitalism parades the streets and main roads of Delhi every working morning and afternoon Enormous resources are deployed to transport children from their homes to their schools and vice versa The sheer scale of this activity is mind-boggling school buses, private buses, public buses, taxis, auto rickshaws, cycle rickshaws, vans, jeeps, cars, mini-buses and all types of two-wheelers are engaged in the task of transporting thousands of children over several kilometres, consuming in the process huge quantities of fuel and using up vast stretches of road and parking space It is not uncommon for children to daily traverse a distance of fifty kilometres to and from the school And all this when much more could be accomplished for much less if only children could walk down to a nearby state-run school where education is free and easily accessible to all those who reside in a particular locality Not that this will ensure full literacy, but this is the minimum that can be done For the time being one would like to draw attention to the inversion which the present system leads to The activity centred on transporting children so that they can be educated, can often acquire greater significance than the activity related to actually imparting education. To cite an example of this inversion, there are innumerable cases where school transport charges far exceed tuition fees—which are by no means nominal in private schools.

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THERE are no short-cut solutions to this problem To begin with, there is now the two-fold vested interest of private schools and of those who derive profits from providing transport facilities Then there is the larger question of the distorted pattern of urban development in Delhi This pattern has its roots in colonial rule This is not the place to go into historical details, but a few basic facts need to be stated Twentieth century Delhi owes its origins to the decision of the colonial government to shift the Capital of their empire in India from Calcutta to Delhi. The immediate context was the agitation against the partition of Bengal and the *swadeshi* movement What the British were really looking for was a place which would be relatively unencumbered by nationalist upheavals and where indigenous groups were not in a position to compete for use of space In Delhi it was possible to appropriate space in a drastic manner, something that had become difficult in Calcutta, was not feasible in Bombay, and might not have been easy in Lahore

Delhi had been systematically destroyed after the revolt of 1857 was brutally suppressed The city continued to languish thereafter At the turn of the present century the political-administrative status of Delhi and levels of economic activity in and around it were not sufficiently important to entitle it to being preferred as the imperial Capital Yet a weak local bourgeoisie and the absence of any politically powerful indigenous group guaranteed that there would be no attempt to interfere with the appropriation of space by the British Government of India. The colonial state was free to build its grand new Capital wherever and in whatever manner it chose to in the vast open space outside the narrow walled city of Shahjahanabad to which Delhi had for all practical purposes been confined

New Delhi was conceived of as a separate self-contained city Indigenous access to it was severely limited, if not totally debarred After 1947 the Indian state has continued with the colonial policy of strictly regulating access to space in New Delhi Barring a few colonies which were built to accommodate the Central Government employees, the middle class and the urban poor have been systematically excluded from Lutyens' Delhi Some space in New Delhi or on its periphery was utilised to accommodate the very affluent or develop places of recreation, clubs and hotels for them As has been frequently pointed out even by more conservative urban planners, this had led to irrational use of urban land in Delhi Further, a disproportionately large area has been appropriated for the exclusive use of foreign embassies More recently one of the few remaining unbuilt spaces in New Delhi, Pragati Maidan, has been given over for the purpose of holding trade fairs and exhibitions so that the affluent sections of the middle class can indulge in consumerist frenzy

In this situation a rapidly growing urban population has little choice but to move to the suburbs Many of the suburban settlements have come up in the rural belt around Delhi This rural belt is at a considerable distance from Lutyens' Delhi A particularly large number of settlements are concentrated in the portion of this belt which lies east of the Yamuna The entire process has been accelerated with the shift of a sizeable section of the professional middle class and lower middle class across the Yamuna in recent years Moving to the suburbs is not a phenomenon that is peculiar to Delhi, but the exceedingly irrational pattern of land use in the Capital has led to an abnormal acceleration of this process in this city No wonder that the growth of basic amenities in new settlements has not kept pace with the unprecedented expansion of housing colonies in the suburbs. Even in settlements which are properly planned and promoted by the Delhi Development Authority, which regulates the use of land in Delhi and is under Central control, little attention is paid to setting up schools and primary health centres It is taken for granted that those who reside in these new settlements will work out their own solutions to the problem of finding schools for children

Given that in a 'liberalised' school system enrolment in suitable schools is both difficult and expensive, admission to a school of one's choice gets precedence over the logistics of transporting the child to school As more and more people get pushed out of *Delhi* both due to commercialisation and the senseless manner in which space has been appropriated in the city, more and more parents have to make a choice between sending their children to a school which has a relatively better standard but is located at a great distance from their home and a school which is nearby but is either a teaching shop or a substandard state-run school In several cases even this choice is not available since no state-run school might have come up in the vicinity In instances where there has been a change of residence there is the reluctance to give up a school with which one is familiar for the uncertainties of a new neighbourhood school.

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It is here that another vested interest takes over Transporting children to school is big business An entire auxiliary economy is sustained by the state's irresponsible attitude towards school education But this economy thrives not just on the private school system but also on an inadequate public transport system There has been no endeavour on the part of the state to compensate its absolute appropriation of space in Lutyens' Delhi with a substantial investment in public transport The kind of public transport that is available in this megalopolis, where lakhs have to commute huge distances daily from their places of residence to their work locations, would in fact be adequate only for a small provincial town In an act of total surrender to the private transport lobby the Central Government had, some time back, decided to wind up bus services of the Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) Bus services of the DTC represented the only, even if largely nominal, investment in public transport in Delhi by the state The decision to withdraw even this nominal investment was only an extension of the Marutis-for-the middle-class-and-big-cars-for-the-rich philosophy which the Indian state has pursued at least since the days of Sanjay Gandhi's ascendancy With the 'liberalisation' of the late eighties this doctrine has been flaunted with even greater shamelessness Just as the affluent and the middle class had forsaken state-run schools during the sixties and seventies, they have given up on public transport during the seventies, eighties and nineties Instead they have pursued the one-car-per-family utopia which in their perception is the hallmark of Western and Japanese capitalism

Since the massive investment which an efficient public transport system would entail amounts to a meaningful redistribution of the surplus in favour of the less privileged, the affluent as well as the middle class have withheld their consent for this kind of intervention Rather they have sought the acquiescence of the state in brazenly appropriating road and parking space by encroaching upon and undermining the rights of the people to this space This is done in various ways not respecting the right of pedestrians to cross roads, expansion of road space by removing pavements, converting entire pavements and public space outside residential and office buildings into authorised or unauthorised private parking space, smoke pollution, noise pollution, rash driving, mere token investment in construction of subways and other facilities for pedestrians, discriminatory exclusion of non-motorised vehicles from public roads through a refusal to recognise their separate and specific requirements (due to lesser speed and greater physical exertion of labour required to ply such vehicles)

A corollary of this acquiescence has been the extensive privatisation of bus services Apart from blue-line (and a few, relatively more expensive, white-line) buses, there is a fleet of 'chartered buses' which mainly transport office workers and school students It is all these private buses which have cumulatively stretched to preposterous limits the appropriation of public space A large proportion of these buses are run by operators looking for quick returns There is also a close link between the growth of residential colonies in the countryside of Delhi and the private transport lobby A section of the dominant landed class in Delhi's rural belt has invested in private buses the money it received as compensation for the land acquired in the process of converting the rural suburbs into new residential settlements This kind of investment promises quick returns especially when the state permits unregulated appropriation of road space At times buses speed recklessly to get ahead of other competing buses on the same route so that they may grab a passenger or two and deny this fare to the other buses The state demonstrates its callousness by making the loss of life due to rash driving merely a minor inconvenience for drivers, thereby rendering worthwhile an extra rupee or two even at the cost of human lives

Speaking of rash bus drivers and the conductors and helpers who egg them on one is struck by the fact that a couple of rupees could mean so much to them The way they race for a few passengers points to the very low level at which they subsist The petty transporters looking for quick returns find it convenient to employ inexperienced and semi-skilled drivers who are cheaper to come by The huge reserve army of the unemployed in Delhi ensures a steady supply of such drivers With their low level of skill they are in no position to bargain for better wages As for conductors and helpers of most private buses, one only has to look at their unclean clothes, their dishevelled hair and desperate manner to grasp how precarious their own existence must be It would then be absurd to expect them to have much respect for the lives of others They are both pathetic tools as well as victims of the private transport system

The bus which crashed into the Yamuna on the morning of November 18 was carrying children studying in Shaheed Amir Chand Sarvodaya Vidyalaya, Ludlow Castle No II, Shaheed Awadh Bihari Sarvodaya Vidyalaya, Ludlow Castle No I and Gujarati School The Ludlow Castle Sarvodaya Vidyalayas are government-run schools They started out as Government Model School No 1 These are among the better government schools in Delhi and have been in existence for several decades The BJP controlled administration of Delhi has been more concerned with form rather than content in giving elaborate new names to these schools and for the rest not doing anything to upgrade them They are located at a stone's throw from the office of the Lt Governor of Delhi and are very near the Old Secretariat, the seat of the Delhi Government The road on which these schools are situated has a number of other prestigious schools including the Gujarati School and St Xavier's School The reputation of these Sarvodaya Vidyalayas and their location make them much sought after among those who would like to give better quality education to their children but cannot afford expensive private schools It is mostly children from lower middle class families who study in these schools Many of these children come from far-flung areas

The ill-fated bus was ferrying children from distant new residential settlements Bhajanpura, Gokalpuri, Yamuna Vihar, Khajuri Khas, Karawal Nagar, Maujpur, Sadatpur, etc All these are in a semi-rural belt roughly fifteen kilometres from the Ludlow Castle schools Schooling facilities in these colonies are so inadequate that for the less privileged studying in Sarvodaya Vidyalayas presents a great opportunity People are so accustomed to the idea of children being transported over long distances in overcrowded buses to attend school that they have become insensitive to the deprivation this implies The nearly 120 children who were regular users of the bus, as indeed thousands of others, are denied the right to a good state-run neighbourhood school, the right to efficient public transport, the right to road space and the right to be protected from the hazards of crossing an unsafe bridge A dreadful aspect of the tragedy was the huge load of books which many children were carrying on their backs and this caused several to speedily sink to the bottom of the river One is reminded of R.K Narayan's fervent plea in Parliament to reduce the backbreaking burden which children have to haul to school and which in the present case hastened the death of many

Mere tinkering cannot take care of all these problems A weak people's movement in Delhi will allow the rights of the people to be trampled upon with greater impunity An incident that should have shaken the city out of its passivity became just a matter of passing reference on the morrow following it as the more exciting topic of how long the UF Government was going to last moved to the centre of many conversations The magnitude of the tragedy and the wholly inadequate response to it prompted the Supreme Court to take cognisance of the incident at its own initiative While the Supreme Court laid down some basic, commonsense guidelines for school buses and for buses in general, the people of Delhi reaped what they have sown for the past several decades

The utter contempt for any lasting social commitment which is reflected in the do-it-yourself principle has ruled out the possibility of enforcing the directives of the court There is just no alternative to private buses Such an alternative requires massive investment (redistribution) and a certain level of commitment both of which are not forthcoming Under the circumstances it was the court and the administration which had to retreat, since the private transport lobby refused to accept even minimum state intervention in the matter of regulating the use of public road space After an initial moment of disquiet we are resigned to the logic of privatisation and the lives of nearly thirty children who died on November 18 have been lost in vain ■

Delhi Slums in the Season of Fresh Promises

SARASWATI HAIDER

Today in India the only concern of everyone seems to be politics It is, of course, not a bad thing to take interest in one's country's politics but what one is being engaged in, in India, is political gossip, with democracy having become only an arthmetical game and politics confined to political manipulations and manoueverings of a criminal, vision and commitment-wise defunct, group of mercenary politicians whose only objective seems to be to come to power by hook or crook to make a fast buck, ethics, morality and ideals thrown expediently to the winds

It is a matter of great concern indeed that even in the media what is splashed on every page of the newspapers, what is being beamed and broadcast on the television, and the radio, is political chit-chat, perfidy, chicanery and charlatanism as if there are no other problems in the country worth writing, or talking about All concern with the abysmal, increasing poverty of India's people, social ills, deprivation touching worrying heights, unchecked price-rise, all-round deterioration of administration, corruption, have taken a back seat, totally forgotten, and one supposes, will remain so, till the looming elections, and perhaps, even beyond One is compelled to ask does the media have no other function than to deliver so-called and perceived political scoops which are nothing but highly questionable and condemnable shenanigans of a band of goondas who have their covetting eyes fixed on the lucre that their inclusion in the different legislatures, no matter how, will bring? Does not the Indian media have a more socially concerned and responsible role to play apart from highlighting the derring-dos of power-hungry politicians? Apparently not

In Delhi the problem of the so-called slums is becoming a monstrous malady portending a horrendous future for the Capital of the country but no one in the media seems to be bothered about it What is the concern about urban poverty in front of who is aligning with whom in the political milieu with its scamster aya Rams and scamster gaya Rams? Nothing at all, it seems A pity indeed

The slum question in Delhi, perhaps all over India, has become a highly vexing problem The twentyfirst century is expected to see very rapid urbanisation of developing countries like India It is predicted that by the year 2000, 66 per cent—almost 2 2 billion—of the world's population will be living in urban areas in developing countries and that these countries will contain 21 of the world's largest 30 metropolitan conglomerations This shall mean a marked shift of rural poverty to urban centres In South Asia the number of urban poor households is expected to triple from about 10 million in 1975 to 32 5 million in 2000 Thus the most urgent problem of the twentyfirst century will be that of slums where the urban poor live—slum being a stigmatising and derogatory naming of the living space of the urban poor requiring change with a discourse on the subject already afloat internationally and a move activated to call these by less disreputable nomenclatures like 'deprived urban areas' (DUAs), 'blighted urban areas', 'gray urban areas', etc

In India the total urban population in 1991 was about 217 million, the rate of urbanisation decelerating from 46 40 in 1971-81 to 36 19 in 1981-91 The Government of India (GOI) sees this as a success of its rural employment programmes but several scholars explain the drop as due to a saturation point reached in urban employment with no growth, inadequate provision of housing and basic amenities The absolute increase of the urban population has still been substantial, that is, 29 million people and the concentration of this population in metros and big cities continues The number of metros (million plus population) increased from 12 in 1981 to 23 in 1991 and 80 more cities were added to Class I (one lakh plus population) category The population in metros and Class I cities increased from 26 per cent to 65, the metros containing 52 per cent of this population and among them just four major metropolitan agglomerations, including Delhi, accounting for 28 64 per cent

The GOI's revised estimates of people living below the poverty line (PL)—the estimation criteria of the PL still in the eye of a controversy—in rural areas was 37 27 per cent and urban, 35 57 per cent, with individual scholars, more realistically, claiming the latter to be 40 per cent, that is, 87 million people who in all probability live in the DUAs

According to the GOI calculations—erring no doubt on the lower side—the population living in the DUAs in 1981 in India was 26.33 per cent with the figure for the metros being as high as 35 per cent. In Delhi the urban population at present is expected to be nearabout 10 million out of which three million are living in squatter settlements, that is, *jhuggi-jhompri* (JJ) clusters, about 1.5 million living in *katras* or inner city DUAs, and another 1.5 million living in unauthorised colonies also lacking basic amentities. In Delhi thus out of every two persons one person is expected to be living in a DUA or an unauthorised colony, a problem needing immediate remedial action.

Nearly four lakh people migrate to Delhi every year mostly from eastern Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Haryana, but a large section also comes from far-off States like Orissa and Tamil Nadu. This population comprises mostly poor rural agricultural labourers or members of the families of marginal farmers who establish or swell the DUAs in Delhi.

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DELHI is witnessing a highly disturbing extremely fast rate of growth of JJ clusters. In 1990 there were about 929 JJ clusters spread all over Delhi with about 2.5 million *jhuggis* housing about 1.5 million people. In 1994 the number of JJ clusters in Delhi increased to 1080 with about five lakh jhuggis housing a population of 2.7 million people. At present there are estimated to be 1100 JJ clusters in Delhi with a population of three million, a sizeable 'vote-bank' making the JJ clusters a hot-bed of political activity, for the votes of their dwellers can make or mar the career of a Delhi politician.

Sometime back the Supreme Court instructed the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) to present before it within a month a plan for the authorised legal settlement of the JJ clusters where they are located at present or else of relocating them in suitable areas.

The DUA problem in Delhi has been the focus of attention from the early 1950s when Jawaharlal Nehru realised the repercussions of their growth but since then till now the government has not been able to formulate a viable, stable policy for Delhi's DUAs.

The MCD instead of formulating a plan, as asked by the court, to stem the tide of increasing JJ clusters and solving the housing and other problems of the existing ones, came up with an eyewash idea of conducting a massive census-type survey which is estimated to cost Rs 1.5 crores recruiting 3000 government personnel to collect data on every single *jhuggi's* detailed socio-economic condition which the MCD hoped could form the basis of a workable policy and would assist it to provide adequate services like taps for safe drinking water, latrines, proper sewerage system, sanitation, medical services, schools, street lights, etc. without the slightest clue as to where the finances for all these will come from.

The MCD did not realise that such a survey would obviously only be relevant for those JJ clusters that are authorised to stay put where they are existing which is only possible if the authorised owners of the land are not interested in reclaiming the land—hardly likely, for the land on which the majority of the JJ clusters are situated is prime land worth hundreds of crores of rupees. The owners, unless they are governmental agencies, would want their land back, or be suitably compensated for, at the existing market rates. The MCD with its ubiquitous financial crunch would not be able to produce the kind of money needed to buy the land. In such a situation what is the utility of the expensive survey?

It seems that the MCD would have to mostly resort to resettlement of JJ clusters but where would it find the required land? This has been given no thought while a plan has been evolved that all the *jhuggi* dwellers who have constructed their *jhuggis* before January 31, 1993, the data conveniently pushed forward in view of the impending Assembly and Lok Sabha elections this year, will have to provide Rs 5000 on their own in lieu of which they will be given a piece of land to construct a dwelling. The MCD will charge Rs 29,000 per *jhuggi* from the owner of the land for getting the land vacated. It will spend Rs 10,000 on the resettlement of the *jhuggi* dwellers. However, what it will do with the remaining Rs 19,000 is not quite clear.

There are other questions that need clarification. Will the *jhuggi* dwellers, most of them barely seeking out a living below the PL, be able to raise Rs 5000 even for the land? According to a study conducted by an eminent regional planner, Prof Amitabh Kundu, the *jhuggi* dwellers are not in a position to come up with even this minimum amount. Will they, in such a situation, also be able to afford the interest to be paid on money that could be given to them to construct a dwelling on credit? Will they not be compelled to construct another *jhuggi* on the resettlement land or sell the land and go and start living in another JJ cluster? If the dwellers are not willing to shift what will the MCD do? Will it, without considering the problem from the viewpoint of the *jhuggi* dwellers (who will no doubt have to hunt for new jobs in the new area) and seeing the situation myopically in a true top-down fashion only as a problem of pollution and disfiguration of the visage of Delhi city and not a human problem, heartlessly demolish the *jhuggis* forcefully which has been its past *modus operandi*? In such a case will not the JJ dwellers go and find another vacant place to establish a new cluster? Can the MCD keep strict vigil on all vacant land in Delhi? What will happen to those *jhuggi* dwellers who have constructed their *jhuggis* after January 31, 1993? Will they also be insensitively, inhumanly, hounded out? Apparently yes, for that is what is happening with disturbing regularity Will such rendered homeless *jhuggi* dwellers not be forced to build another *jhuggi*?

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THE Buch Committee report on the growing number of 'slums' (DUAs) in Delhi, that was submitted sometime back, and is unjustly being accused of political motivations though the minor factual errors pointed out could certainly have been avoided, has, perhaps, most practically, suggested, that land management and the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) both under the jurisdiction of the Centre should be transferred to the Delhi Government if the Capital has to be saved from imminent doom, that the best solution to the problem of 'slums' (read JJ clusters) with three million people living in them is to carry out *in situ* upgradation than to relocate them, land being scarce and the shift bound to cause great misery to the DUA dwellers The Delhi DUAs have been shunted to and fro between the DDA and MCD in the past causing a lot of confusion of jurisdiction The DMC under the Delhi Government, and the DDA under the Centre, with the DUAs being a political bonanza, has led to a tug-of-war between the BJP Delhi Government and the earlier Congress, and till recently, the United Front Government at the Centre, since the DUAs in Delhi are a sizeable 'vote-bank' and amenities provided in a clientelist fashion can capture this 'vote-bank' The Buch Committee has stipulated, very much in line with the experience and conclusion reached in most developing countries, that it would not be possible to shift the present JJ dwellers to alternate sites and so the maximum number of clusters should be allowed to remain where they are, if the land is not needed for immediate public use The Committee has also realistically suggested that the present deadline on the resettlement of 'slums' (JJ clusters) should be done away with Its report professes that a census should be carried out in a JJ cluster only if it is to be shifted and that also within 48 hours whenever announcement for the relocation is made so that there is no time for irregularities to creep in and land claimed wrongly The Committee has advised, very rightly, seeing the urgency of the problem, that the process of relocation should be completed within three months In the past this has often taken years or been kept in abeyance for a long time increasing the insecurity of the DUA dwellers The report suggests, again, one feels, correctly, that a Housing Board be set up for the city to provide housing for the large number of migrants It advises that each of the nine Deputy Commissioners should look out for land where such houses for migrants can be constructed

One of the most crucial aspects of the DUA problem in Delhi, which is perhaps the centre-most problem, to which the MCD think-tank has not applied itself, is the problem of the continuous inflow of poor migrants in the Capital leading to the formation of new JJ clusters or swelling existing ones increasingly If this pouring-in is not held back, which was to be done with the development of ring towns around Delhi as a part of the development of the National Capital Region, the plan of which is unheedingly gathering dust, the JJ clusters will continue to exist and remain an insoluble problem—a cancerous dead-end malady The Buch Committee report takes this into consideration, does not recommend a wasteful census-like survey but that low-wage (they should not be low-wage), low-technology industries should be relocated outside the Capital to check the influx of unskilled labour This influx has created a situation where the population of the Capital grows by 50 per cent every seven years

However, the report apparently ignores the very vital dimension of the problems of JJ clusters and that is the intensive politicisation of their need for housing and other basic amenities Politicians try to draw full mileage over the basic needs of the JJ dwellers which makes the DUA policies susceptible to political interference and contest The problems of JJ clusters are caught in a cross-fire of politicians belonging to different parties all outdoing each other to promise provision of all facilities to the DUA dwellers if votes are cast in their favour, forgetting the promises promptly once the elections are over, keeping these problems ever alive so that they can be used again and again to garner votes in a political machine-like style of politics that has become a hallmark of Delhi's political scene How does one bring an end to this? Neither the MCD nor the Buch Committee has anything to say how this bane of the lives of the JJ dwellers can be handled ■

BLUE PENCIL

Newspaper-TV Competition on Poll Coverage

G S BHARGAVA

Considering that this will be the first general election with the electronic media, particularly television, focusing on it in a big way, how do the newspapers face the competition? In what way can they enable the readers to participate purposefully in the elections? The question is relevant for two reasons First, the newspapers in all languages also cater mainly to those citizens who have access to television, especially Doordarshan with its monopoly of terrestrial reach Since television beats the print medium in time, it has to make the best of its advantage in space Secondly, about a decade ago when television made its debut in the country in a big way—with Rajiv Gandhi investing in colour television in preference to other national priorities and with a rash of TV transmitters dotting the land—there was apprehension that the visual medium will render the newspapers nearly redundant. It has not happened, partly because of the poverty of content of televisions programmes With their accent on cinema, they became sources of entertainment and no more Even if the newspapers had to spruce up their appearance with colour pictures and attention to films, sports, women, and children, the fear of television supplanting them has been belied Will it be so in the coverage of the elections also?

Strangely enough, although the general election has been forced on the country far ahead of the schedule and the campaign period has been reduced by ten days, it has already peaked by the time the nominations for the first phase of polling have been filed According to the Prime Minister in a Doordarshan interview, this is because of the paucity of issues caused by the pulling down of his government on a non-issue I also think that with a surfeit of television channels taking to election coverage with a bang, there has been a profligate exhaustion of issues which the average journalist can think of No less importantly, not only have the spokespersons of the parties been limited in number so too the anchors and 'experts' drawn mostly from the newspapers So there is too much recycling the same faces and the same issues day after day, resulting, understandably, in ennui among the viewers

The newspapers can cash in on this incipient viewer fatigue with television talk shows if they do their home work diligently and go about the election coverage systematically The tendency to fill space with anything handy can be counter-productive For instance, the UNI which has been refreshingly active this season has put out interviews with Abdul Rehman Antulay on the need to dump the parliamentary system and opt for the presidential form of government and with Bal Tackeray on remote control in politics That too on the same day Neither the interviewees nor the subjects make the readers sit up and pore over 500 words of cold print

Similarly, every correspondent who reports on Sonia Gandhi's peregrinations thinks it necessary to focus on her outfit, *sari* or *salwar kameez* as the case may be, giving details of the colour, material, etc At one of the meetings, men-journalists were seen picking the brains of their colleagues of the other sex on the finer aspects of female apparel Gucci shoes have been mentioned, only the makers of the dress material remain to be identified No wonder, Sonia Gandhi's nationality becomes an issue in a country with more illiterates than at the time of independence

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It is not that the contesting parties speak out the truth on any of the social and political problems or that they will be bound by what they say Still, it is a necessary exercise in national education if topics like compulsory primary education, child care, gender equality and public health get highlighted From this perspective, the BJP's election manifesto has done a wholesome job

But how many newspapers have handled it professionally? *The Hindustan Times* headlines on the report are "True to its form, BJP hums *Hindutva* tune, dubs Sonia Gandhi as (sic) 'foreign hand' " The story which followed did not dwell on the fairly comprehensive socio-economic agenda described in the document, although this seems to have happened for the first time The 1996 manifesto of the party did not betray even the vision to comprehend such issues *The Times of India* which has been suggesting in its news columns as well as editorially that the BJP is in competition with its rivals in wooing the minorities did not publish on that day So one cannot say how it would have treated the party sticking to the Ram temple and a common civil code

But its sister publication, *The Economic Times*, had a curtain-raiser, so to say, on the manifesto in a lead story with Swaminathan Aiyar's by-line on the previous day It forecast the manifesto offering to make India 'an overt nuclear and missile power' evoking US or international sanctions Apparently better counsels have prevailed with the authors of the manifesto because it does not go the whole hog, except for the rhetoric in the introduction The proposed National Security Council is left with the final say in the matter The *Deccan Herald* story is matter of fact and lucid, with the headlines saying · "Manifesto underscores cultural nationalism, BJP for nuclear arms, Ram temple, common civil code"

Finally, there has been a welcome addition to house journals which are of two kinds, the glossy periodicals like that of the Kuwait Embassy and meaty broadsheets the latest of which is *Rashtra Mahila*, the monthly publication of the National Commission for Women (NCW) Among the statutory and other commissions, the National Human Rights Commission has been the first to publish a newsletter The NCW started its house journal last month, which provides insight into happenings concerning women For instance, the December 1997 issue mentions three study reports of the commission on tribal women and refers in some detail to the findings of its inquiry into atrocities against women in Khargone district of Madhya Pradesh. Since the newspapers have no mind, even in normal times, for such data, the commissions' publications, even if given to publicity of their chairpersons to some extent, fill the gap ■

LEFT PERSPECTIVE

Need of the Hour : United Front-type Coalition Government

D. RAJA

The following is the text of the speech by the Secretary, CPI National Council, broadcast on AIR on February 9, 1998

After just a few days, you will be voting to elect the twelfth Lok Sabha

I appeal to you to vote for the United Front, the Left parties, the Communist Party of India!

The United Front emerged as a collective expression of the mandate given by the people in the 1996 elections It was a mandate for secular democracy, federalism, economic development, social justice and for good governance-transparent and corruption-free

The United Front emerged as an alternative to the discredited Congress and to the communal Bharatiya Janata Party

The Communist Party of India alongwith the other Left parties played a significant role in forming the United Front and formulating its policies

The CPI took a historic decision to join the UF Government

The regional parties as constituents of the UF have shown exemplary maturity and responsibility in running the government and the country. It is the UF that has given people from all parts of the country a sense of belonging and a feeling of participation in running our great country The UF has provided a positive alternative to earlier governments

Then why did the UF Government fall? Why has this mid-term poll been imposed?

The reasons are well known

The CPI as well as the UF rejected the sweeping observations made by the Jain Commission casting outrageous aspersions against the entire Tamil people of Tamil Nadu. We refused to compromise on the issue of national unity We refused to accept the politically motivated and unsubstantiated indictment of the DMK

The Congress party lacks reasoning It lacks vision It has no positive ideological and political agenda for India's future

The Congress regime was a regime of corruptions and scandals The Congress stands accused not only for scandals but also for scuttling the probes into corruption cases The classic case is the Bofors pay-off case. Let me say that in 18 months of UF rule there was no scandal or scam We assure you to continue this clean record in the future

Its Manifesto is nothing but a manifestation of deception and even self-deception Its apology for the demolition of the Babri Masjid and its confessions of its past mistakes, suddenly at the time of elections, are nothing but a cheap trick to hoodwink the people It is a party in deep crisis It believes in sycophancy and personality cult rather than policies and principles It is no more a party worthy to rule the country

The BJP is not at all a party with difference as it claimed in the past It is a party which refuses to acknowledge unity in diversity—unity through the diversity of the country It is a party which indulges in misuse and abuse of religion for political purpose It is a party which poses a grave threat to the republican character of our Constitution and to the plural democratic system in our country

The BJP Manifesto itself exposes the party's nefarious design to use anything to satisfy its lust for power. It agenda is the agenda of the RSS

Nationalism is more a ploy to target some communities and sections for its attack It has no concern for the nation or for the people as a whole

The BJP's proposal for a Presidential form of government is not to strengthen parliamentary democracy, but to divide the people and to impose its sectarian theocratic political order

Much is being said about stability by the BJP and the Congress But the manner in which the question of stability is raised by the BJP and the Congress is awkward and ridiculous Stability does not mean one-party majority rule Stability means ensuring security of food, security of employment, security of education, security of health, security of shelter and, above all, security of life to the citizens Stability means a self-reliant economy Stability means guaranteeing more powers to the States and maintaining harmonious Centre-State relations Stability means corruption-free, transparent good governance

Both the BJP and the Congress can never provide such a stability!

The BJP has least respect for values and morality in political and public life Look at the allies of the BJP, the AIADMK and Shiv Sena! The AIADMK is a symbol of corruption and misrule The AIADMK claims to be a part of the Dravidian movement The secular and rationalist traditions of the Dravidian movement and of Singaravelu Chettiyar and Periyar have been sullied by the AIADMK Communalism and corruption stand hand in hand How can the BJP speak about corruption? With the record of UP and Gujarat how can the BJP speak about stability?

With the record of Rajasthan and Maharashtra administrations how can the BJP speak about good governance?

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THE CPI is of the view that our parliamentary democracy has entered an era of coalition governments at the Centre What type of coalition government does the country need today?

The answer is an emphatic 'yes' to the UF type of coalition government today

The CPI made tremendous contribution to the policies and the performance of the government

Our two Ministers in the government took significant initiatives on policy matters The Home Minister, Indrajit Gupta, took the initiative to convene and activise the Inter-State Council It was never convened during the Congress regime It has given a new direction and dimension to the federal polity of our country

As a result of its deliberations, the UF Government could evolve a consensus to raise the share of the State Governments from the Central taxes and levies to 29 per cent A process of consultations was instituted to suitably amend Article 356, to prevent its misuse

A move has been initiated for drastic reforms in the police

The Agriculture Minister, Chaturanan Mishra, initiated several measures in the interests of farmers Experimental crop insurance scheme, bank credit and National Seed Policy were introduced for the first time in the country

These are a few to mention among many other things The CPI Ministers in the UF Government worked as guardians of the interests of various sections of the working people

The Left, and in particular the CPI, played a crucial role in pushing the performance of the government on a positive direction towards self-reliant growth, and employment, towards better health and education, and towards reduction of poverty and inequalities

The UF Government could not carry out some of its commitments due to the unstable support given by the Congress from outside Several legislative initiatives such as the Agricultural Worker's Bill, the Women's Reservation Bill, electoral reforms, judicial reforms, Lok Pal, right to information, and primary education as a fundamental right, etc were on the top of the agenda of the UF Public distribution system was one more priority Strengthening the public sector was a priority Land reforms was concern of the UF

That is the reason we ask you to give a clear majority to the United Front We will strive for the pending legislative initiatives

We will make all efforts to defend and promote the interest of the Dalits, adivasies, minorities, women and children

I pledge that my party will

— defend the secular-democratic basis of the Indian Republic and national unity,

— emphasise pro-people economic policies,

— advance the struggle for a corruption-free government and system,

— ensure a stable UF Government which will work for growth with equity

Therefore, dear voters, vote for the Left!

Vote for the CPI! The symbol of the CPI is Sickle and Ears of Corn! ■

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS (FEBRUARY 1-7, 1998)

NATIONAL

February 1

- Assam Government doubles its demand for paramilitary forces from 388 companies a month ago to 609 companies now in view of the banned ULFA asking people to boycott the February 16 poll
- BJP President L K Advani tells a press conference in Chennai that his party and its allies are sure to win 300 parliamentary seats and they will form a coalition government even if the BJP gets absolute majority on its own
- Punjab Pradesh Congress Committee and the Punjab units of the CPI and the BSP have been instructed by their respective high commands to support each other in the elections, says a PPCC release in Chandigarh
- Mrs Sonia Gandhi accompanied by son Rahul arrives at Amethi, the constituency represented by her husband the late Rajiv Gandhi, and addresses an emotionally charged crowd, recalling her association and promising concern for them,
- Protesting Air Traffic Controllers decide to defer their agitation after a marathon meeting with Civil Aviation Minister C M Ibrahim, Secretary M K Kaw and senior officials of the Airport Authority

February 2

- BJP Prime Ministerial candidate Atal Behari Vajpayee addresses his first election rally in the Capital urging the electorate to elect all the seven BJP candidates from Delhi in order to make him Prime Minister of a *tikau* (stable) government He attacks the Congress for breaking promises and pulling down the Gujral Government and terms the UF as a "compromise without principles"
- Mrs Sonia Gandhi addresses a rally at Nalgonda, supposed to be a Naxalite heartland, and accuses the BJP of harbouring the same mindset which killed Mahatma Gandhi but using soft language to mislead the voter She promises the Congress will launch a whole series of welfare measures to alleviate the misery of the poor
- Prime Minister Gujral, speaking at the UF rally in Chennai, says the BJP wants stability to loot the nation and to demolish religious structures playing one community against another
- Samata Party leader George Fernandes at the BJP rally in Delhi, asks Mrs Sonia Gandhi to bring back Italian businessman Octavio Quottrochi if she wants the truth about the Bofors gun deal
- BSP leader Ms Mayawati tells her voters at Itaunja, 30 km from Lucknow, to teach the BJP a lesson while over 27 lakh teachers in UP decide to launch a campaign to defeat the BJP candidates in the State
- Resident doctors in the Capital's prestigious All India Institute of Medical Sciences stick to their "work to rule" agitation affecting services at the OPD, the casualty and surgery wards
- A six-seater SAIL aircraft coming from Delhi crashes some 25 kilometres west of Bhilai killing five top officials and the pilot

February 3

- BJP releases its manifesto in New Delhi which pledges to facilitate the construction of Ram Mandir at Ayodhya, to abrogate Article 370 of the Constitution which grants special status to Jammu and Kashmir, to formulate a Uniform Civil Code and to make India a nuclear power if it comes to power
- United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) sends to newspapers through fax a statement banning poll rallies and all other forms of electioneering and asks the national leaders to stay out of Assam
- Samata Party leader George Fernandes, a BJP ally, says "construction of Ram Mandir, abrogation of Article 370 and Uniform Civil Code do not form part of our joint agenda"
- BJP list of candidates for UP is reported to have 18 candidates with criminal records

February 4

- Major political parties in Assam appeal to the ULFA to reconsider its ban on electioneering in the State The ruling Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) says only a small section may be affected by the threat
- West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu tells Eenadu television "When the United Front decides its Prime Minister, we will see If it is offered to me I have never shirked responsibility "
- Committee for the Defence of Secularism, set up by veteran journalist Kuldip Nayar, MP and comprising 14 intellectuals, reveals that the BJP got only 20 29 per cent of votes at its allies 4 77 per cent, and they can be marginalised if all the secular forces contest the elections unitedly
- Air Traffic Controllers say that the Rs 200 crore airport radar, set up two years ago, at Bijawasan, Delhi,

has failed crucial tests It is freezing and not reliable

- Doctors at the AIIMS, Delhi call off their strike after an agreement with the management following a Delhi High Court order

February 5

- Assam Governor Lt Gen S K Sinha rejects the CBI plea for sanction to prosecute Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta in the multi-crore Letter of Credit scam on the ground that there is no *prima facie* evidence against him
- A spokesman of the External Affairs Ministry says "We are in touch with Iraq at the highest level We would like to contribute through diplomatic means to solve the impasse"
- Janata Dal releases its manifesto in the Capital with the slogan "Power to the Grassroots with Stability" The manifesto promises a separate Ministry for Minorities, an Agriculture Price Stabilisation Fund and to promote liberalisation keeping in view that the "market is for the people, not the people for the market"

February 6

- Congress spokesman VN Gadgil releases a confessional statement of Atal Behari Vajpayee made before a Magistrate in Agra in 1942 disclaiming that he did not damage any government property and gave no assistance He gave the names of two freedom fighters (accusing them of demolishing the office building of the forest department) who were sentenced to five years rigorous imprisonment
- BJP releases a supplementary manifesto for Delhi promising full Statehood to Delhi
- Mrs Sonia Gandhi defies the ULFA ban and addresses Congress rallies at North Lakhimpur, Nagaon and Shillong She reminds that the Assam Accord was signed by her husband Rajiv Gandhi facilitating Asom Gana Parishad to come to power but they did not do anything for the development of the State

February 7

- Congress expels former Union Minister Buta Singh for deciding to contest the Lok Sabha poll from Jalore in Rajasthan as an independent against the Congress candidate
- BJP spokesperson Sushma Swaraj discloses that Mrs Sonia Gandhi is ignorant of our culture and urges to vote for a leader who is a son of the soil
- Lok Sabha Speaker P A Sangma says no party, not even the Congress, will get a majority and the future is not good in view of the emerging scenario of a hung Parliament
- BSP leader Kanshi Ram tells reporters in Jaipur "Instability suits us because it results in quick mid-term poll and this helps us to increase our poll percentage"
- Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray says he will not allow the Pakistani cricket team in Bombay because Pakistan called off the play against a visiting India A team to express solidarity with Muslim separatists in Jammu and Kashmir

INTERNATIONAL

February 1

- United States proposes to issue new orders banning the export of high-performing computers to countries which may develop nuclear weapons, says *The Washington Post* India is among the countries named for the ban
- Sri Lankan troops kill 300 Tamil Tigers during a major offensive against the rebels in the island's north near Kilinochchi, some 27 km from Colombo
- Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem says at Davos, Switzerland that he was going to Baghdad in quest of a diplomatic solution as "a military strike seems imminent" unless Iraq allows free access to UN weapons inspection team
- UN Secretary General Kofi Annan proposes to expand an oil-for-food deal with Iraq to $5 billion from $ 2 billion now allowed for every six month period
- Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey writes to Prime Minister Tony Blair expressing concern that Ministers were taking their unmarried consorts abroad at tax payers' expense and pleads that the Labour Government should set an example of monogamy and sanctity of marriage
- Britain imposes a total ban on private ownership of hand guns
- Pakistan's Information Minister Mushahid Hussain says India should apologise to the people of Kashmir "for the worst human rights abuses by Indian security forces"

February 2

- China rejects allegations of human rights abuse, made in the US State Department's annual report, and terms these as "fabricated and unwarranted" and motivated by a desire to interfere in internal matters
- New forest fires spotted in East Kalimontan, Indonesia, causes haze over the airport of the provincial capital and raises fears of another wave of thick smog
- US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright arrives in Riyadh, capital of Saudi Arabia, and denies that the Arab world opposed the hard-line stand of the US
- Seventyone per cent of Americans, says a *Los Angeles Times* poll, support use of military force against Iraq if UN inspectors are denied free access to sites suspected of containing nuclear or biological/chemical weapons
- Paying glowing tributes to Mahatma Gandhi in the multi-faith service in London, Sir Richard Attenborough maker of the epic film "Gandhi", says Gandhi would have wished us "to apply all our endeavours to eradicate that most pernicious form of violence"—poverty

February 3

- French President Jacques Chirac's special envoy Bertrand Dufoureq arrives in Baghdad with a letter for President Saddam Hussain, presumably urging the letter to tone down his resistance to UN arms inspectors
- Prince Charles, heir apparent to the British throne, arrives at Colombo amidst tightest ever security to participate in the 50th Anniversary celebrations of the Independence of Sri Lanka
- US President Bill Clinton asks the Congress to allocate special funds for resumption of military training for Pakistani officers
- Pakistan Government and the World Bank sign an agreement for grant of 10 billion dollars for reducing

Pakistan Times *Editorial on Gandhiji's Assassination*

G S Bhargava in *Blue Pencil (Mainstream,* February 7, 1998) refers to the editorial published in the *Pakistan Times* (January 31, 1948) regarding Gandhiji's assassination *Mainstream* had reproduced this editorial, *Glorious Dust,* in its issue of January 24, 1998 Bhargava attributes the editorial to Faiz Ahmed Faiz The editorial, however, appears at pages 723-725 of the book *Pakistan The First Twelve Years (The Pakistan Times Editorials of Mazhar Ali Khan),* published by Oxford University Press, Karachi in 1996

Presumably, therefore, the editorial was written by Mazhar Ali Khan

Bhargava had earlier made reference to the *Pakistan Times* editorial in *Janata,* Bombay (April 2, 1989) At that time Bhargava had said merely that the editorial was "*reportedly* written by Faiz himself" He had added that it was "said to have moved Nehru to tears" Regardless of who wrote it, the editorial still moves us half-a-century later

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poverty levels in the country with preconditions to curb corruption and ensure better utilisation of funds

- On the eve of his visit to the US, British Prime Minister Tony Blair tells the US correspondents in London that he was proud to the call President Bill Clinton a friend and advises that "politics should not be run at the level of a gossip column" as it distracts leaders from issues "of huge importance to world'
- US First Lady Hillary Clinton tells the World Economic Forum at Davos, Switzerland "It is in your interest to educate children and provide more opportunities for women around the world"
- Clinton administration, intent on using force against Iraq, doubts the efficacy of a massive strike US Defence Secretary William Cohen says "Do not expect too much"

February 4

- Russian President Boris Yeltsin tells Deputy Prime Minister Anatoly Chubais that US President Bill Clinton's actions over Iraq could trigger a world war Interfax news agency quotes Yeltsin saying "He is acting too brazenly there"
- Pakistani Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Siddique Kanju warns it may review its non-proliferation nuclear policy if India decides to opt for nuclear weapons
- Pakistan's anti-corruption chief Ghulam Murtaza, a retired judge, files its first case against former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto
- Lahore High Court dismisses the petition of former Chief Justice of Pakistan Sajjad Ali Shah's petition challenging his removal from the post
- A US military plane from the Aviano Nato airbase hits and cuts a cable car at the Italian ski resort Cavalese sends the car hurtling down 80 metres and kills all the 20 tourists

February 5

- Iranian English language *The Iran Daily* reports that Iran will appoint its first woman ambassador to one of the European countries
- Christians in Pakistan threaten to boycott the census, scheduled for the next month, unless its representatives are included in the census teams
- UK House of Lords inducts first Black woman Baroness Amos of Brondesbury, immigrant from Guyana who was made a life peer by the Labour Government, on October 23, 1997
- President Boris Yeltsin reaffirms that he shall not allow a military strike against Iraq He claims French and Italian support for his stand

February 6

- Thousands of people are killed by a severe earthquake in northern Afghanistan The reported death toll reaches upto 4000
- Drought in South-East Asia, forest fires, rains and severe winter in other regions, all caused by the El Nino may cost the economics billions of dollars The El Nino occurs every few years and is a vast pool of abnormally warm water brought about by changes in atmospheric pressure and ocean movements in the equatorial Pacific
- US President Bill Clinton and visiting British Premier Tony Blair cement their alliance and make public declarations of faith in each others leadership and their faith in the grand alliance
- Britain, Portugal and Sweden push ahead in the UN a draft resolution that would allow Iraq to more than double the amount of oil it can sell for buying humanitarian supplies

February 7

- Former Pakistan Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto accuses Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of having offered Rs one core to his Indian counterpart I K Gujral to facilitate his re-election
- Kuwait's crown prince says all Kuwaitis will be given gas masks "within two days" in case of a chemical-biological attack by Iraq
- Lord Derry Irvine, Lord Chancellor and a senior figure in Britain's Labour Government, suggests that newspapers should take clearance from a press watchdog before publishing stories that might invade personal privacy In the face of virulent attacks in the press, Premier Blair's spokesman says the Lord Chancellor expressed his personal opinion
- Iraq reacts angrily to the new oil-for-food proposal saying it could not allow the UN to dictate how funds should be allocated for humanitarian supplies ■

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A labour worker's aim should be to raise the moral and the intellectual height of labour, and thus by sheer merit, to make him or her capable not merely of bettering his or her material condition, but making labour the master of the means of production instead of being the slave that it is. Capital should be labour's servant, not its master.

MKGandhi

Sah Brothers

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Edited and published by Sumit Chakravartty *for* PERSPECTIVE PUBLICATIONS PRIVATE LTD, 145/1D, Shahpur Jat (First Floor), (Near Asiad Village), New Delhi-110049 *Printed at* NEW DELHI PRINTERS, 20/7 Old Market,West Patel Nagar, New Delhi-110008 *Editor* Sumit Chakravartty *Editorial Adviser* Nikhil Chakravartty *Manager* Jasjit Kay Nagra

Mainstream

VOL XXXVI No 9 February 21,1998 Rs 7

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Reforming UN : Exaggerated Preoccupation

'OPEN LETTER TO PAKISTANI RULERS' BY PAKISTAN'S PROMINENT PUBLIC FIGURE, MUBASHIR HASAN

EDITORIAL

Timely Warning

With large-scale violence marring the first phase of the twelfth Lok Sabha elections it is a sad commentary on the state of our parliamentary democracy Regardless of Chief Election Commissioner M S Gill's complacent attitude to the poll violence that took a toll of slightly less than 30 lives on February 16, the day the first round of polling took place, it throws up ominous portents in the backdrop of frightful prospects of instability at the Centre the elections are unlikely to dispel whatever their eventual outcome In this context what becomes imperative at this juncture is organised intervention by the public in general, with well-meaning individuals having no political axe to grind spearheading such an endeavour, to resist electoral violence on the one hand and prevent the country's destabilisation on the other

What is most amazing is the CEC's studied indifference to the scale and magnitude of the violence before and on the polling day M S Gill is reported to have said the violence was "nothing unnatural" considering over 250 million people had cast votes " In spite of apprehensions of violence, the polls were largely peaceful barring sporadic incidents in Bihar," he claimed Earlier he betrayed supreme unconcern when in an interview he stated "The law and order situation is under good control and polling is going on smoothly I am satisfied "

True, considering the gigantic scale of organising elections in India the violence was not widespread on the polling day But incidents of violence and vote tampering in Bihar cannot be overlooked on the ground that that State has always been prone to such incidents If anything, the incidents have lately assumed serious proportions in Bihar and the latest round of polling only confirmed this fact Every democrat cannot but be perturbed by this development However, Gill displays a totally different attitude that needs to be strongly decried If he wants kudos for himself and his team—of course, none is trying to ignore their tireless efforts to ensure peaceful polling—such an approach becomes counter-productive The serial bomb blasts in Coimbatore on the eve of the elections, the persistent extremist depredations in the North-East, and the Bihar incidents in which Laloo's goons kept pace with the various Naxalite outfits to stall the electorate's free exercise of franchise must all be regarded as a slur on the world's largest democracy striking at the very roots of our parliamentary democratic traditions, and exposing in the process the growing weakness of our polity after fifty years of our existence as an independent state

Politics in India has literally become the last resort of the scoundrel and all political parties without exception must be held responsible for this state of affairs The poll violence has helped to magnify this problem Unless citizens join hands to stem the rot on this score, Indian democracy cannot be saved from gradual extinction For there are enough forces in our body politic waiting to install an authoritarian dispensation that would ultimately lead to the country's inexorable dismemberment

The first round of the twelfth Lok Sabha elections has sounded a timely note of warning It would be suicidal on our part not to pay heed to it

February 17 S C

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Poll Scene and 'Politics of the States'

NIKHIL CHAKRAVARTTY

By actual calculation, the first round of polling in the general elections for the Lok Sabha was marginal. There was a shortage of five per cent for what was achieved at the last election which hardly mattered. But Election Commissioner Gill can barely have a comfortable time when he has to take into account the fact that a large number of those who voted on February 16 were for a stable government and as such could not be satisfied with a 'hung' Parliament. In fact, it is beyond the purview of the Election Commission to so design his work as to give vent to what aspires in the mind of the people, that is, the voter. What the Election Commission is to ensure is peaceful poll and nothing more than that. It is the will of the voter to decide whether he or she should be ruled by a coalition or by a one-party government.

In the present context, the overwhelming will of the people—as could be understood from the mood of the voter—is that there should be a stable government and that was exactly what he or she has craved for. To a certain extent, there has been disappointment on the part of the Indian voter. On the other hand, one can venture to say that in many parts of the country, the need for a government was all that mattered. This could be seen in Bihar and Assam, where in place of violence, what the government of the day has sought is legitimacy. In areas where violence has persisted, it is obvious that violence is matched by democracy and instead of the ballot box, naked violence has prevailed.

This has been true in Coimbatore as well, but there the case is different if it is proved what the Centre has claimed, namely, the cynical operation of the foreign hand in bringing about serial bombings and therefore create a terrorist situation in the area. Presumably the objective there has been to ensure that anarchy prevails in place of democracy, so that it is possible to belittle the grandeur of Indian democracy. Here lies the pernicious aspect of the Coimbatore blasts, if the 'foreign hand' theory of the Union Home Ministry is maintained. As far as the blaming of the BJP for the Coimbatore mischief on the State Government or of the Congress President Sitaram Kesri on the RSS is concerned, one has to take such charges with a pinch of salt, as every party engaged in the elections would like to blame its opponent for the disaster. One need not read more into them than what has already been said.

It would be a mistake to speculate as to who will win and lose after the happenings that have taken place. Obviously, the violence in Bihar and UP is meant to secure votes and in that respect, the power of the strong arm has to be acknowledged. However, what has taken place in Assam does not by itself mean that the winning side has been indulging in violence. It is quite possible that a losing side has been indulging in violence and to that extent, it would be difficult to say as to which side has won in Assam. The *'fatwa'* that there must be no poll does not by itself mean that the winning side has established its authority by saying that that no poll would be permitted so long as the demands were not met. A defeated side could also take that posture.

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THE fact of the matter is that despite all the uncertainties and all that the anti-social elements have put in, the heavy turnout is a fact which can hardly be denied. For a party of the size of the BJP, which does not have ramifications all over the country, one cannot help appreciating the fact that the allies of the BJP have provided the means by which it could reach out to the man in the street everywhere. This is no doubt creditable. It is yet to be seen how much the BJP leadership will have to pay for this. It is possible that only a marginal price would have to be paid, and that the BJP is in a position to afford this extra latitude when it has been trying hard to be an all-India party. Obviously, *Hindutva* by itself will not lead it anywhere and the local touch is necessary for every approach. Obviously, the pristine image of any party is to a certain extent sullied by the overtures it has to make to win over the local or parochial support it needs to become the 'national' party. The Congress in its experience has done that. It is necessary for the BJP to understand that and in place of being unalloyed it has to adjust itself to the local requirements. This is what is expected of it as it can hardly take the swift position that it was indulging in when it was known as the Opposition party. In other words, it has to take into account the adjustments necessary for making it a 'national' party.

Has any of the parties shown signs of such adjustments in the present context? If we follow the turbulent politics of the last two years, we find that none of the parties of the United Front or the BJP have brought about this change Rather, the tendency has been to be acceptable to the State-level changes In other words, the parties have tussled to adjust themselves as political parties which are adjustable to the changes expected of political parties that are exclusively confined to the State-level We could see this very clearly in the case of the Tamil parties. This was also clear in the case of the Bofors, though one can hardly say that the DMK has been anywhere near to the Bofors kickback as the Congress is

In trying to adjust themselves to what is called the so-called 'politics of the States', they have lost much of their original flair and have reconciled to the acceptance of the State-level position Obviously, these parties would like to be treated as State-level parties rather than go beyond them In fact, they would rather undertake the liability of parties that have cooped up at the State level, instead of exploring the possibilities of the so-called 'national' parties This could be seen in the case of the Janata Dal, which sticks to its position that the Yadav ancestry must be enhanced if it has to establish itself as the party of the original Yadavs in other words, it would rather use this in countering the other Janata Dal which is its main enemy so far as Bihar is concerned

All this will be clear when we reach the total in the second week of March India of tomorrow is more accustomed to caste politics—which is on the whole, local—than could be seen in the national politics of tomorrow ■

MUSINGS

The Season of Red Herrings

I.K. SHUKLA

This one deserves to be in Aesop's Fables A brinjal advising a palm tree not to stretch its limbs That's what Kesri's admonition of Jyoti Basu's avowal vis-a-vis prospective Premiership amounts to. Quite a farcial side-show But isn't the entire election exercise a massive masquerade, a mega theatre in pretence?

The poll manifestos of major parties are, by some tacit consent, conspiratorially silent on the issues of substance affecting the lives of millions Rehabilitating Ram is more of a priority than rehabilitating the multitudes of homeless Loyalty to neo-*Hindutva* is openly being touted as superior to that to India Bullying the minorities to shrink and morph into vote-banks for the majoritarian Juggernaut and forget alien concepts like equal rights for all citizens, is what the slogan of "one land, one people, one culture" viciously and manifestly enjoins

Any idea, even remotely suspect as seeking to empower people—women, dalits, tribals, bonded labour—is verboten Any notion of participatory decision-making by the masses in matters affecting them is taboo The predatory concerns of the tycoons and transnationals are being solicitously addressed

Election after cynical election the carnival of fraud and fakery merrily rolls on in an unending cycle of repeat performances, with politicos as shills for the rich and super-rich The country keeps rotting, mired in illiteracy, immiseration, malnutrition, social iniquities, distributive disparities, corrupt bureaucracy, politics of crime and outlawry, collapsing infrastructure, spiralling inflation, galloping pollution, ecological despoliation, unwieldy and unresponsive administration, mounting foreign debt, sinking rupee, alienated media, cultural poisoning, and eroding sovereignty

The ruling class—from refugees, informers, and Amazon spinsters of the BJP to the Don Quixotes of the United Front, from the cartoon monsters of a Sena to the wax figures of the Congress museum—is unanimous on throwing and sowing red herrings across the election trail, a device that always works It is thus that people are deflected from voicing their issues as against those of the politicos and robber barons, native and alien

Corruption, secularism, common civil code, Article 370, Akhand Bharat, neo-*Hindutva* as patriotism, and Ram are various names of the red herrings scattered liberally on the election vista Ram reduced to a red herring by neo-Hindus! With all of them, including parliamentary Communists and institutional communalists, sold on the "global", and vying for more "reform", the occasional squeak of *swadeshi* and self-reliance, is too phoney and puerile for comment It is not even amusing Stability is a code word for "Let us rule in perpetuity"

Who wants corruption gone? Not the society nor the professional politicians For a beginning, why not probe how an ex-Premier came to acquire prime property in the vicinity of Delhi? As to criminalisation of politics, why not begin by nailing down Nemi Chand Jain alias Chandraswami, a cross between El Capone and Rasputin? If they are all not stuffed birds and ventriloquists, let them begin with New Delhi's stinking scams, and swarming swindles

And, let the secularists and neo-Hindus add permanently the season of red herrings as the seventh in the national climate and calendar, to the traditional six ones It has the commendable virtue of novelty, the "democratic" variety, in its favour ■

Federal Politics and the Kerala Model

KALEESWARAM RAJ

The imported phrase 'hung Parliament' sounds fundamentally erroneous The error is not merely linguistic, but perceptional A perception of democracy based on majority-minority bipolarisation has its roots in countries like England, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, etc It presupposes a 'clear Parliament' where the majority rules and others are ruled Even in these countries, as in India, often there is an apparent disparity between the number of votes polled in favour of a particular political party and the number of seats which it bags Though a party fails to get 40 per cent of the total votes, it could get even more than 60 per cent of the seats

Attempts for a solution to this anomaly were made in proportional representative systems as in Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, France, etc Coalition politics appears to be the next phase in the democratic development Even when each component in itself is a minority, the coalition front gets a majority which represents a multiple number of people and their varied interests Theoretically, Robert Dahl finds an 'attenuation of majority rule' in this transition[1] Polyarchy, in essence, therefore differs from the conventional democracies where democracy is often taken for sheer majoritarianism So it follows that a dispersed Parliament need not be necessarily a hung Parliament and the former would be the correct phrase

Polyarchy in itself is a positive development and, according to Dahl, it has succeeded to a good extent in Modern Dynamic Pluralist Societies (MDP Societies) To quote Dahl

> What is crucial about an MDP Society is that on the one hand it inhibits the concentration of power in any single unified set of actors, and on the other it disperses power among a number of relatively independent actors Because of their power and autonomy, the actors can resist unilateral domination, compete with one another for advantages, engage in conflict and bargaining, and pursue independent actions of their own Characteristic of an MDP Society is a dispersion of *political resources* such as money, knowledge, status, and access to organisations, of *strategic locations*, particularly in economic, scientific, educational and cultural affairs, and of *bargaining positions*, both overt and latent in economic affairs, science, communications, education and elsewhere[2]

Notwithstanding the pluralist characteristics, Indian society is neither modern nor dynamic A typical Western MDP Society, as visualised by Dahl, is neither possible nor probable in the Indian context on account of the historical and economic limitations imposed by colonialism and the feudal agrarian background Dahl himself is of the view that India is the "leading contemporary exception to the general relation between Polyarchy and MDP Society" But it would appear that alongwith some leaders in India, he also shares a general euphoria when he says that

> The extraordinary number of subcultures (in India) formed by language, caste, region, religion make it impossible for any one of them or even a coalition among a few, to win elections, much less to govern Party leaders are therefore powerfully motivated to shape policies, programmes and propaganda that will appeal to voters across a broad spectrum of subcultures As a result, subcultural conflicts have not destroyed polyarchy in India, though they constantly endanger its survival[3]

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IT would be relevant to critically read Dahl and also to examine his views in the light of the current phase of 'federalisation' of Indian politics Dahl's observation hardly appeals to the actual state of affairs in India On the one hand, his observations are too broad and those ignore the imminent danger of fundamentalist centralism in contemporary India On the other hand, those assume, in an unrealistic way, the existence of policies and programmes by political parties including those which are federal in character, without connecting the same with the question of economic reforms Alongwith Dahl, the advocates of the 'third force' in India also tend to ignore the economic imperatives of federal political

The author is an Advocate at the High Court of Kerala, Ernakulam programmes Therefore the issue of federal coalition politics has to be addressed in terms of the economic realities of the country The Kerala model, in this context, appears to be a useful tool not merely in terms of its coalition politics but in terms of its development strategy as well

Two major coalitions—the Left Democratic Front led by the CPM and the United Democratic Front led by the Congress-I—are the major forces in Kerala politics where the BJP is almost marginalised together with other fundamental forces like the PDP It has to be emphasised that the form of coalition *per se* has not led to the development of the State The much celebrated Kerala model of development is the manifestation of radical revolutions in two fundamental areas like land and knowledge, materialised by land reforms and literacy Richard W Franke and Barbara H Chasin, two American scholars who had carried out an extensive study on the 'Kerala model', trace the following factors among others that led to the success of Kerala's development experience[4] i) radical reforms initiated by the progressive forces and committed leaders of the Left parties, ii) a pragmatic and rational policy for public distribution of food, iii) improvement in the area of public health, iv) development in the fields of literacy and education, v) legislative measures for land reforms and better labour conditions

Kerala's development experiences now require to be attended in terms of the secular strategies in India, if any After Jaya Prakash Narayan, perhaps VP Singh was the only politician to highlight mandalism as a national agenda But even VP Singh could not follow up his own initiations properly and his vision of social justice also lacked a holistic approach regarding basic economic reforms Though much is said about new politics and the third force, it appears that a concrete strategy is yet to be evolved by the regional parties which are components of the United Front The legitimacy crisis of the third force is not merely due to the lack of a secular morality so as to counter the pseduo-morality of the communalists, but also due to the absence of a concrete political programme in terms of the specific economic realities of the Indian States Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka are the South Indian States where feudalism is still a harsh reality The remaining part of India also does not show any difference No secular, federal party can attain legitimacy unless it moulds a strategy for radical changes in the areas of land, education and public distribution systems at the State level But it would appear that the apostles of 'federalisation' and secularism indulge more in mere rhetorics, rather than concrete political and economic strategies If the programmes of the TMC, DMK, TDP or AGP are examined, it would be clear that those are strategically sterile in terms of economic theory and practice It is futile to think that progressive changes could be made by merely forming a government at the Centre It is primarily at the level of the respective States that the federal political parties should set the agenda for reforms, for which the lessons from Kerala would be profusely useful Even in Kerala, in the absence of the radical economic changes indicated above, the picture would have been different and a Kerala model would not have been evolved merely basing on coalition politics

If there are no attempts for such grassroot level changes, even the beneficiary measures taken by the Centre would become ultimately ineffectual The first Union Budget by Chidambaram which was celebrated as a pro-farmer one is a recent example When the price of fertilisers, power tillers, etc was reduced, only the rich landlords could benefit and their interests alone were safeguarded A revolutionary pro-farmer Union Budget is a myth as long as the structural and functional edifice of feudalism is not politically shattered Likewise, the problem of illiteracy has to be addressed as the most crucial violation of human rights in the country

The possibility for a federal structure and governance, as available in the present Constitution, is yet to be explored by the regional parties As such they should attempt to create a model economic set-up in their respective States so that their claim for power at the Centre would attain legitimacy What happened to the ideology of socialism in India is something that calls for a deeper analysis It has been wounded and diluted, perhaps more than the ideology of secularism No one is now serious about land reforms and the election manifestos of the 'third force' are also practically silent about such fundamental changes This could ultimately lead to a situation of bipolarisation of our politics, placing the Congress-I and the BJP as the major rivals Even a situation where the communal forces become the principal Opposition is not a healthy development for our polity A positive change in the political equations would be possible only when there is a polarisation between the secular forces which in itself should be capable of marginalising the communal forces, as in Kerala ■

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2 *Ibid*, p 252

3 *Ibid*, p 260

4 Richard W Franke and Barbara H Chasin, *Kerala Development through Radical Reform*, pages 112-117, Promilla and Co, New Delhi

Open Letter to Pakistani Rulers

MUBASHIR HASAN

Dr Hasan is an outstanding figure in Pakistan's democratic movement Beginning as a distinguished civil engineer, he was elected to the Pakistan National Assembly in the historic 1970 elections He was the Minister of Finance, Planning and Economic Affairs in Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's Cabinet (1971-74) Thereafter he became Secretary-General of the Pakistan People's Party (1975-77) He was imprisoned under three military dictators—Ayub Khan, Yahya Khan and Zia-ul-Haq Zia imprisoned him in the torture cell of Lahore prison In 1984 he founded the Independent Planning Commission of Pakistan In 1994 he alongwith Asma Jehangir set up the civil liberties organisation, Savera *A member of the Human Rights Council of Pakistan, he was in charge of organising the late Mir Murtaza Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (Shahid)—headed by Murtaza's widow, Ghinwa—in Punjab in the course of the February 1997 parliamentary elections in that country*

The following piece appeared in two parts in the Pakistani daily Nation *(January 16, 1998 and January 17, 1998) from where it is being reproduced with due acknowledgement and the author's consent*

Please think of your predecessors in the high offices you hold today While some of them were unworthy of holding the responsibilities that came their way, others wanted to serve Pakistan and enhance its security and well being Despite their best efforts, they failed to stem the rot in the political, social, economic and moral life of the country

Good intentions, anxious concern and routine performance of duties are not enough to reverse our march towards common destruction The Shah of Iran, Daud and Taraki of Afghanistan, Gorbachev of USSR, Mujibur Rahman and Ziaur Rahman of Bangladesh, and a succession of Sri Lankan leaders and all the civil and military apparatuses of their state had good intentions Unless you dispassionately examine why rulers after rulers have failed over the last fifty years and then choose the right course, a calamitous fate awaits all of us

When you discuss in private the gravity of the national scene with your friends, colleagues, subordinates or superiors, many among you realise your helplessness to pursue the right course or to get the desired results There is always some individual or some institution frustrating your intentions and action, making you almost a spectator despite the high office you hold In such moments do you not feel that the entire system of governance, except the niché you hold in it, has ground to a halt in Pakistan?

During the last fifty years, there has been no dearth of efforts for improving the conditions of governance in Pakistan The Pakistani rulers established a record of sorts in adopting or revising Constitutions or making radical changes in them Presidential, parliamentary and Martial Law governments were freely tried All kinds and types of Prime Ministers, sixteen in twentysix years of civilian rule, and scores and scores of Chief Ministers were seated and unseated Scores of politicians were disqualified for years Thousands of government servants were sacked, hundreds of thousands were transferred to improve governance

Pakistan has rapidly regressed towards gross misgovernance in the last two decades What goes by the label of governance today is, in its essentials, nothing more than a collusion between politicians and salaried classes with large entourages of hangers-on, elected and unelected Politicians do not govern but collude with apparatus of the state, not as rules and regulations demand but through a policy of carrot and stick. The daily press is full of stories of their exploits in illegal and immoral self-enrichment

Among the former colonies of Britain in South Asia, Pakistan is the first country where the administrative structure built by the British has palpably broken down The nation is in the grip of an incipient civil war Life, property and honour of citizens are at the mercy of gun or money or political clout behind the gun Only the rich and those in power are relatively secure The machinery of the state operates to extract money from the majority of citizens and to afford protection to its own minions The money extracted from the bulk of the population either directly through bribe or stolen through government channels passes into the hands of a small minority Its members can loot and plunder and protect murderers and kidnappers with impunity and not get caught The same is the case for India and Bangladesh But the Indians have been slower in graduating to our level of chaos

As most of the world moves forward, Pakistan moves backwards Four thousand industrial units have closed down, more are on the way to closing down Agriculture stagnates The land once known as the granary of the subcontinent imports millions of tons of wheat every year Rupee continues to slide against world currencies. The wealth of Pakistan accumulated over one hundred and fifty years in the form of public assets is being disposed off at throwaway prices Inflation is rampant Unemployment is threatening social peace The country stands helplessly by in the face of ethnic tension, sectarian strife and religious antagonism, nothing to speak of the violation of the rights of women, children and minorities

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WHAT went wrong during the course of our brief history in the attempts made by your predecessors to find the right solution is simple to comprehend, if we search for those basic aspects of civil society which did not change with the change of Constitutions, Presidents and Prime Ministers

First, the relations between the masses and the police have not changed since the time of the *raj* The proverbial man-in-the-street continues to consider the police as a body of armed men which abuses him, tortures him, extracts money out of him—a body which operates for itself, for those in authority or for those who have money When the Rangers or the military are called out in aid of civil power, they are viewed as super police forces, who have come to help the very same police the people cannot trust, indeed, the police they despise. As a result, especially during the last two decades, while the police have remained unreformed, the military and paramilitary earned a bad name.

Second, the relations between the masses and the revenue authorities have also not changed since the time of the *raj* Indeed they have become worse than before The manner in which *patwaris, qanungos, tehsildars,* assistant collectors rob the people and Collectors, Commissioners and members of the Boards of Revenue helplessly look on, and indeed some of them become a party to the loot and illegal patronage, is yet another pathetic aspect of the functioning of the state that has not changed

Third, except for brief periods immediately after the partition and in the early seventies, Pakistanis in general do not consider the state of Pakistan (as distinguished from governments) to be their own Thus assets of the state as well as public money are treated as if these were the *mal* of the East India Company, a fair booty to grab and run away with Too many people have begun to speak of Pakistan as if it is someone else's country By way of ridicule they say, *"Ji, yeh to Pakistan hai"*

The curse of corruption is a direct manifestation of the absence of the rule of law on the one hand and on the other hand of the ability of an individual, deputed to perform public duty, to act as if he was the state in his own person It is tantamount to the dissipation of the authority of the state into thousands and thousands of hands It is no wonder that servants of the state consider their work to be a *chakkar,* a quite not-straight assignment, to be performed as it suits or benefits them And the masses too refuse to put their heart in the process of production Why should they work hard, they say, when the just fruits of their labour are denied them They do not want to become a party to enriching the industrialist any more than they have to, in order to keep the job they have They believe that the *seth* is going to take the money out of the country and they instinctively abhor working for him It is this hesitancy and noncooperation on the part of labour, peasant, white collar worker and government employee to be an active participant in the process of production, distribution and administration that lies at the root of the decline afflicting the national economy

The environment of injustice, inequity, poverty and other manmade afflictions feed ethnic, religious and sectarian antagonisms The oppressed, themselves, unable to identify the root cause of their state, are willing to be guided by specious slogans Hundreds if not thousands have been killed in Pakistan every year as a result of mindless and often unprovoked violence

Pakistan must get out of the vicious circle of worsening peace and security situation and sinking economy What was tried by your predecessors and did not work in the past shall not work in future either and you should not insist on trying that again As the Persian axiom states· *Azmooda ra azmoodan jehl ast* Any number of armies of policemen, supported by corps of paramilitary men acting under the most stringent laws shall be of no avail This apparatus of state had outlived its utility even for the British We have brought it to a grinding halt The highly centralised and bureaucratised apparatus of the state of the pre-partition India was created by imperial Britain in order to enable a relatively small number of British officers assisted by a larger number of natives to rule over a population of scores of millions. The strategy implied establishing a clear distinction between the rulers and the ruled This distinction has continued in the states of South Asia half a century after the departure of the British As a result the entire population stands divided into two antagonistic groups In the name of the exigencies of the state, the salaried ruling elite of the British days and its accomplices have run the ship of the state aground. This system must give way to a new administrative set-up, a new constitutional dispensation Pakistan has to start with a new agenda

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It should be realised that police brutality, loot and plunder by revenue officials, broken roads and streets, overflowing drains, stinking pools of undrained water and sewage, empty water taps, fused bulbs of street lights and erratic supply of electricity cause great resentment among the people. This seemingly unending state of affairs is responsible for alienating the masses from the state It is thus resentment accumulated over a period which, off and on, explodes as individual or mass violence The perpetrators of the outbursts when they smash a traffic signal, torch a bus to fire, kill a policeman or indulge in sectarian violence are hardly aware of the reasons hidden deep inside their psyche which lead them to the violent acts It is essential that the obvious and the underlying factors striking at the integrity of the country and alienating the people from the state of Pakistan are countered at their roots.

The main objective of the new agenda should be empowerment of the people at local, district, divisional (only for large urban areas), and provincial levels making the federation truly a united and strong body of an empowered people The empowerment of the people should mean that the highly centralised government at the federal and provincial levels exercising power from distant capitals through a manipulatable bureaucracy, primarily interested in its salary, promotions and loot, should be replaced by democratic institutions exercising jurisdiction over relatively smaller territories Among the major problems the following need most urgent and immediate attention

Protection of life and property and honour of citizens

The new agenda should give highest priority to protection of life, property and honour of all citizens Now who needs this protection most? Those who are provided protection by the state or those who are rich enough to employ guards and gunmen are relatively safe Not only ordinary criminals hesitate to operate against them but also the predatory functionaries of the state tend to leave them alone Then, those who have access to persons in authority, or those who are in a position to bribe officials and buy their safety are also in a class separate from that of the overwhelming majority of Pakistanis Men, women, and children in villages, *mohallas, bazaars, mandis,* and to the shame of all of us, even in mosques and churches, need protection the most They are the chief victims of the prevailing lawlessness They are truly helpless against injustices of the present law and order apparatus of the state They are terribly insecure It is their sense of insecurity that makes Pakistan insecure Women dare not go out alone Every mother waits anxiously every day for the return of her child from school. The masses feel terribly oppressed, cheated and deprived in Pakistan. It is they who need to see, feel and enjoy the rule of law

Now, criminals, there always have been The relatively recent alarming development that the new agenda must tackle is that, by and large, criminals have acquired effective protectors Crime, on a scale larger than ever before, is committed by loyalists or mercenaries on behalf of powerful patrons These protectors are located in the administrative set-up Also they are found in positions where they can influence the administrative set-up That is done either through the exercise of patronage or use of money The sources of patronage may be found everywhere, in executive, legislature, judiciary or among the rich or political elite from Peshawar to Karachi

The task under the new agenda should be to sever the connection between those who man the apparatus of criminal justice at the local level and those who are in a position to pressurise or influence it Let the equivalent of the SHO and the *ilaqa* Magistrate in the new system be independent of the district, provincial and federal administrations Make the people of an *ilaqa* responsible for peace and security in their area Let the criminal justice set-up be responsible to the people of the area for trial and conviction of most of the criminals Let them blame themselves, and not the Chief Minister or Prime Minister, if a criminal act committee in their area is not punished The big crimes or those difficult to investigate may be dealt with at a level higher than that of *ilaqa*

Transparent system of land record and of settlement of revenue disputes

THE system of maintaining revenue records and of settlement of revenue disputes ranks only second in corruption and oppression to what goes by the name of the system of criminal justice Big *zamindar waderas,* big owners of real estate, custodians of railway's *auqf,* and government land and big and small officials of the revenue departments are one great mafia The bulk of the helpless two-legged population of Pakistan, trying to maintain to assert its claim of ownership or of right to till a piece of motherland, is the victim of the mafia A citizen without means and influence can never feel sure of what he owns or tills His insecurity is complete It must be removed Let him be sure that he really and truly owns, or can till without fear, a tiny, tiny piece of Pakistan he can call his own

The task of the new agenda should be to sever the connection between the officialdom of the revenue department and those who are in a position to pressurise or influence it Let a local record office, independent of the existing governmental set-up of Collector, Commissioner and Board of Revenue be created Let those who man the new set-up be responsible to the people of the area Make the people of the area oversee, within the ambit of a new law, that the newly-created successors to *patwaris, qanoongos* and *tehsildars* act fairly and judicially Let the people of the *ilaqa* blame themselves, and not the Chief Minister or Prime Minister if misdeeds are committed Let them have an apparatus capable of undoing wrong acts Let there be a provision in the laws of the province for local-level intervention to correct persistent irregular application of law

Economic and efficient running of local health and educational facilities and other facilities of infrastructure

AT the level of village, *mohalla* and small town, the apparatus of the state to man and supervise working of schools, dispensaries, maternity centres, maintenance of water supplies, drains, streets, spaces meant for parks has broken down Bulk of the funds meant for maintenance of these facilities are embezzled or frittered away All laws under which these services operate are flouted with impunity It is therefore imperative that the local population is made responsible for planning, construction and maintenance of these services and facilities District level hospitals, high schools, roads of district or city importance, large water supply and sewage systems and other facilities should be made the responsibility of people's bodies at district and city levels

Provincial Autonomy

THAT the ship of the state cannot be put on an even keel by reform at the micro-level is obvious Equally, if not more, urgent is the need for drastic structural changes at the macro-level As provincial authorities are divested of responsibilities that can be better discharged at lower levels, their regulatory and supervisory functions, especially those aimed at social and ethnic integration, will increase Likewise the federation will shed some of its burdens and be free to concentrate on the means of fostering national unity

The major exercise of the authority of the people at the provincial level should be the power to legislate and administer all subjects except defence, foreign affairs, sea and air transport, the State Bank and banking, immigration, foreign trade, Supreme Court, provincial disputes, fundamental and human rights, distribution and exploitation of river waters, railways, strategic roads, national television and radio and other electronic communication systems, meteorology, and weights and measures.

The provinces should exercise power in matters such as universities, research institutes, provincial roads, provincial hospitals, prisons, big crime, provincial judiciary including High Courts, provincial service systems such as irrigation, electricity, fuel and mineral resources, provincial banks, provincial television and radio and other electronic communication systems The rest of the administration may be left with bodies lower than the province, under constitutional guarantees lest the provinces may subvert the power of the people at lower levels

We see little choice left with you except to make basic changes in how Pakistan is governed There will have to be a carefully planned transition period You must act now Get the proposals examined and become a party to an extensive and intensive debate

The writing on the wall is clear If you do not act now, the coming events in Pakistan may be identical to those what Iran of the Shah, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka have passed or are passing through and India is fast inching towards ■

A DEVELOPED NATION BY 2025

Technology Options for India

P.S. DEODHAR

These are turbulent, economically uncertain and technologically fast changing times. Predicting or forecasting the world scenario by 2025 would, therefore, be not a very easy task. A large majority of people in the world are anxious and worried about the future. The third millennium, it is said, has been blessed in the Bible to bring peace and contentment to mankind. The OECD International Futures Programme has been designed to help the decision-makers in government and industry to come to grips with the situation in this complex and uncertain world. It will, therefore, be appropriate to expect that the OECD will help the world to prove God right. You, gentlemen, can do so not only by assessing the trends shaping our long-term future but also by redirecting, if necessary, the economic, social and technological forces to drive the change in an appropriate direction and also at a greater speed. This involves an early warning to the world community of planners on emerging domestic and international issues and accurately pinpointing major developments and their significance.

Though invited to this important OECD meeting in my personal capacity, I want to thank you on behalf of my country, India, for having given the platform to contribute our views and perceptions. Whatever may be the global influences and whatever be the economic help given to us by world bodies, we believe that it is ultimately ourselves who should identify our intrinsic strengths and cash in on them. It is we who should evolve an OECD-like approach to help our government and our industry to set policy agendas and map strategies to use technologies to speed up development and benefit from the process of globalisation. We should identify technologies where India can interact with the world community more closely and in a mutually beneficial fashion.

India's Primary Handicap : the "Malthusian Trap"

THE most important handicap for India in its efforts to make a confident entry into the next century is the "Malthusian Trap". It appears the most threatening and negates the gains of development. We have to bring down the rate of population growth on a war footing, and also achieve compensating improvements in productivity. Determined efforts of a few and cooperation from many more should make anything possible. For instance, the study of GNP growth over the last 25 years of various countries reveal that a rapid growth of the economy is possible. As many as seven countries, including a large one like China, have achieved an average annual growth rate from four to seven per cent during this period. No doubt there are issues relating to unequal spread of benefits of development and prosperity in these countries but it has helped them to catch up. It also establishes that proper policy initiative supported with determined implementation can enable even a developing country to achieve miracles.

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We, therefore, have to avoid the Malthusian Trap by not only bringing down the net population growth rate but also aiming for attractive productivity gains by using new and appropriate technologies. For instance, each farm animal works for just three months in a year. For nine months it is grazing and resting. During this period it can easily deliver half a horsepower. If just 100 million farm animals are harnessed to such work as lifting water to, say, 100 feet height and use this stored potential energy for whatever application, we shall get 50,000 megawatts of power input for several hours a day. Incidentally this input is essentially free since animals are, in any case, fed. This would be by far a more effective replacement of solar energy, which is costing us heavily in foreign exchange. Innovations like this will help India to find answers to its own special needs.

Embracing Technology with Caution

AT the threshold of the twentyfirst century it is quite certain that economic development even in India and its global interactivity will have technology at its core. Deregulation and privatisation in India in 1991 have proved this point in spite of the fact that this initiative has not yet effectively percolated down the line at the operational level The macro-economic performance of India during this period has indeed fallen short of expectations A careful study reveals that procrastination and bureaucratic delays in the deployment of technology is the major cause In the twentyfirst century it would be too risky for India to fail in utilising the potentials of new technologies and embrace them enthusiastically This will improve the speed and help us take the direction of developments which would benefit the largest number of our countrymen At the same time, it would be far more risky to be too optimistic about the new technologies and not consider social, economic and political constraints

We have also to be cautious in not getting sold on Utopian dreams about technologies sold by its corporate salesman It is essential to carefully watch the secondary downstream consequences of certain technologies. In this regard, we see an opportunity in historically studying such undesirable impacts of technology in the OECD countries and learn from your successes and failures For instance, your extraordinary dependence on personal automobiles and consequential high investments to create urban infrastructure to handle this traffic should caution us not to repeat similar errors The success of inducting technologies heavily depends on the socio-economic context It cannot only be "Supply pushed" by its vendors but should be "Demand pulled" by the social and economic needs. Luckily for us society, even in the West, is considerably slower in absorbing technology than the pace of technology development itself India, therefore, has an advantage in being your follower in taking to the new technologies It can help us to avoid the pitfalls and also get these technologies in a more mature form As an added advantage, the cost at which one can get them also becomes significantly lower

Need for an Empowered World Agency to avoid Misuse of IPR

TECHNOLOGY and its development, in essence, is neutral It is a product of restless innovative minds and inventive genius It evolves without any constraint or consideration Inventive genius finds new materials, creates new ones, detects new properties just to fulfill one's intellectual curiosity One discovers and one invents just because of an intellectual push It is a part of human spirit and it would go on with no reference to consequences However, the world community cannot just allow these discoveries and inventions to be used by the commercial world without scrutiny

There is a need to create a widely represented empowered global agency to carefully overview deployment of new technologies specially on a large scale Such an agency should evaluate socio-economic and cultural desirability of the new technologies and their environmental consequences. Now that global powers have agreed to protect the Intellectual Property Rights of individuals and corporations who do not have any public accountability or may or may not bother about social concerns, it has become imperative for the world community to create such a global agency to restrain individuals and companies from hurting the short-term and long-term interest of the community at large. Such agency should also prevent them from deriving unfair and unlimited financial benefits out of the IPR granted to them.

Ignored Warnings

THE first 150 years of the Industrial Age, beginning in the early nineteenth century, were the golden years for science and technology It made human life more comfortable, physically stress-free, healthy and helped individuals to be more efficient and extraordinarily productive It helped society to add great value through its increased productivity and be wealthy By 1940, however, the whistles started blowing Thoreau, Butler, Arnold, Huxley and even Charlie Chaplin in his inimitable way made their deep felt protests about the society's unmindful and self-defeating chase of materialistic pleasures and also the ill-effects of technologies which were tampering with nature Vance Packard's *The Waste Makers* and Rachel Carson's *Silent Springs* published in 1962 highlighted the dangers of growing pollution and chemical poisoning Immediately followed the report of the Club of Rome in 1971 It pointed out how the geometric growth of population and the pollution and similar depletion of natural resources would make industrial and agricultural production more and more expensive and ultimately unsustainable Even though quantitatively inaccurate, qualitatively it indeed pointed in the right direction

As this was happening, new technologies were emerging with a far greater promise and that too at an alarming speed This made earlier inventions look like mere tinkering Semiconductor, Computer, Communication Technologies merged to create the new Information Age The space technology gave it a powerful global dimension At the other end, development in genetics created the Biotechnology. It made possible the study of vital functions in organisms and plants at a molecular level. Soon enough, this knowledge is getting used in industry by creating products to solve formerly insurmountable problems in health and agriculture. Both these profound technologies, no doubt, have associated risks. Specially in case of the latter, safety in its application has become a matter of great debate. Even in information technology the nature of the growth of the mass media, specially the use of the satellite television seems to have brought forward new opportunities as well as new risks at the cultural level. In my book entitled *The Third Parent* I have highlighted its impact on the young and families. Growth of television was mainly enabled through its commercial use for marketing goods, services and ideas. This has provoked a serious debate.

The German Noble Laureate, Konrad Lorenz, amongst several others, strongly protested misuse of the media by the corporations. In 1973, he outlined the "Civilised Man's Eight Deadly Sins". The last amongst them was human indoctrinability. He pointed out how consumerism was being cleverly promoted through propaganda that does not sound or look like propaganda. Most of us tend to believe we can readily recognise and distinguish between fantasy and reality, fact and fiction, or truth and falsehood. Actually, however, it is established that we can be indoctrinated, brainwashed, programmed, or persuaded rather easily.

Television has been made into a great brainwashing laundromat by the media moguls. The young amongst the elite in India already feel naked without the jeans, barefoot without Nike or Reebok, thirsty without Pepsi or Coke, and hungry without the McDonald. India has to learn from all this. Today environmental devastation in the West may be considerably more pronounced on a per capita basis, but India has also to be cautious. Our green mass has already declined considerably.

Accordingly to Lorenz, the new developments in the West have led to atrophy of feelings, abuse of inventive and innovative energies and destruction of traditions. We need to take note of this. For instance, if we measure efficiency of a machine or process by its output to input ratio, then the Western man, whose per capita consumption of material wealth and whose per capita contribution to pollution is several times higher than those in the rest of the world, cannot be called "efficient" by any measure. In that sense, is the Western world really a developed world?

Careful Use of Technology is the Best Option

THE purpose, my friends, is not to criticise or prove ourselves right. Such thoughts only confirm that we should not take to technology without a careful thought. No doubt there is much to learn from the Western model and adopt it. However, discussing whether or not you are a developed society, is a needless exercise, and would not help our effort to benefit from technology. It only cautions us not to ape the rest of the world.

Technology is a powerful tool. In proper hands, it has and it will do wonders. It is the only way that will help us to catch up with the world in economic terms and even benefit ourselves culturally. Technology offers us the only option to bring about more homogeneity through better understanding of our diversity, of our strengths and of our weakness. We have no other option for a speedy development except through technology. In my opinion, both the Information Technology and Biotechnology as applied to agriculture would prove to be our best prime movers for development.

The Indian Background

TILL 1991, for the first 44 years the Indian Government continued to protect its industries through ban or restricted imports as well as high import tariff protection. This indeed helped in earlier years but later unmonitored protection, combined with the bureaucratic hold over the industry through the licence-permit regime, proved totally counter-productive. The industries became instrinsically weak, inefficient and non-competitive. Public sector companies owned by the government started to rely upon state spending and saddled the economy with resource sapping, unremunerative investments.

In 1991, the Indian Government relented to sustained pressure from the IMF and World Bank and liberalised the industrial policies by delicensing and reducing import restrictions and high import tariffs rates. By and large, this has enforced foreign competition on an ill-prepared and weak domestic industry. Availability of quality goods and the services to the Indian consumers has sharply improved through heavy imports. This has increased trade volumes but domestic value addition in manufacturing has increased only marginally. While the import duties have been reduced, local taxes levied by the city, State and Central administration continue to be high. This makes domestic inputs too expensive. This hurts the export efforts and consequently prevents India from beneficially using its low cost, educated and trained labour force Lack of efficient banking and commercial infrastructure needed for export trade has severely restricted and throttled the growth in exports

Using the opportunities created by globalisation, China has achieved substantially higher exports than India Notwithstanding India's intrinsic strength like widespread use of the English language, low-cost skilled manpower, large domestic market, etc, China has overtaken it in the global trade A strong Central Government and its focused attention to develop foreign trade has helped China to notch up impressive export growth Discipline, even though imposed, has also helped China to make itself attractive to investors Discipline, in any case, is a good fertiliser for gains in productivity India's Central Government is weak and unstable ever since 1991 Unprincipled coalitions and consequential intensity of political activity left our successive governments no time to think of the twentyfirst century Consequently the important issue of unrestrained growth in population and the lack of counterbalancing growth in economic value addition have remained largely unaddressed

Is the Western Model an Ideal One?

On the other hand, there are other larger issues to be considered. Can India switch overnight from its much maligned mixed economy with socialist objectives to the much acclaimed market economy? Is the Western world a worthy role model? Has the market economy helped the West to bring widespread prosperity shared by many? Has it helped them bridge the gulf in their countries between the rich and the poor? Has it made their people happy and contented? Has per capita contribution to pollution declined? Is the West replenishing the vast amount of natural resources they are consuming on a per capita basis? Has crime and general anxiety declined? If not, why adopt market driven globalisation in its Western format which would probably mean taking the same road leading us to a similar fate or even worst

Yet, at least, in purely economic terms, it would be Information Technology and Bio-technology as applied to agriculture which would help India to get over the hump It will help us generate additional resources to finance our growing needs in the twentyfirst century. They are our ideal vehicles Lack of the export trade infrastructure to efficiently handle the product manufacturing activity makes India less attractive than China to the global firms at least on an immediate basis Democracy, illiteracy, poverty and associated indiscipline and corruption handicaps India as compared to China China can offer regimented manpower from amongst its people who have no rights to protest No wonder, therefore, considerable hardware manufacturing has moved into China, long-term security considerations notwithstanding

India itself is, indeed, two countries rolled into one Urban and Rural India Urban India has great things to offer to Information Technology customers in the developed world It is already a recognised and much sought after source of software for the world It speaks the language, its information doors have always been wide open and a lot of its educated manpower has a strong base in mathematics and logic None in the Pacific Rim can match these skills Moreover, for every Indian who is employed in Western countries today, there are at least a hundred available within the country with an equal or better expertise Their services can be used via single-hop satellite links which are already existing both for the US and Europe. Computer education and awareness is speedily growing in every city of India The Government of India can do much more to help However, Infotech Industry is minimally dependent on the government

Biotech will enrich Rural India

Rural India has been generally doing well even though the poorer farmers are not yet able to share this success Seventy per cent of Indians live in Rural India India has considerable investments in Agrotechnology The 'Green' and the 'White' revolution in the sixties and seventies has already made India a net exporter of food Yet adoption of Biotechnology can pay richer dividends A great scope exists for Food Processing and packaging technologies Benefits of this revolution can reach even the marginal farmers through the cooperative movement More money in the hands of these farmers will also provide a growing market to industrial and domestic consumables

Biotech revolution in agriculture has a great promise for India This will help us to take agricultural output growth ahead of the population growth Creating crops which are resistant to disease, which can grow in semi-arid conditions and which are rich nutrients will help tremendously India is already committed to Biotech research and is investing time and money to improve crop breeding, animal embryo transfers, etc A similar thrust in value addition through food processing will substantially increase export earnings

Rural India is changing its face due to the telecommunications reaching even hinterlands A village pay phone and a community fax will benefit fast economic growth These benefits may be intangible but are enormous It is already boosting the operational efficiency in administration, health care, banking and financial services, commercial distribution of goods, trade and even law and order It will reduce the burden on transport and avoid unnecessary and often hazardous travel

Information Technology Strengths: a Resource

ON the other hand Urban India has a mindset that is considerably Westernised Specially the elite are mobile and getting increasingly global in outlook. Foreign satellite television, NBC, BBC and CNN, are selling the Western ways very well intermingled with commercials from multinationals. The elite ape the West well, sing the same songs and use the same cosmetics They have even taken to aerobics and love their DJs and VJs Ideally, they could have served as a bridge to bring in what we want from the West and keep out what we don't All the same these men and women make wealthy Westerners feel comfortable about India

They help to cushion the cultural shock the visitors would otherwise get Software exports grew 60 per cent last year and are poised to grow more this year Yet India's share is just below one per cent of the world market With a little imagination it can grow to five per cent without any substantial monetary investment What is needed is to invest in imaginative thinking and more aggressive salesmanship India's need for foreign exchange resources to build its presently poor basic infrastructure can all come through software export Resource generation can also be very rapid

If India succeeds to achieve this, it may not have to borrow as much and consequently avoid burdening those who would have to manage India in the twentyfirst century without the debt traps ■

[Paper presented at the OECD meeting on "Technologies for the Twentyfirst Century—with Social and Environmental Goals" (Dusseldorf, Germany, December 7, 1997)]

IMPRESSIONS

On Election-eve Apologies

SATYAPAL DANG

Apologies have become an election issue It is, therefore, necessary to go into the matter dispassionately

Sonia Gandhi expressed her deep anguish at 'Operation Bluestar' and this has been characterised as apology and then attacked as a gimmick to get votes, hypocrisy, etc. To pass a judgement on Sonia Gandhi and her critics in this connection, it is necessary to keep the relevant facts in view

The entry of the Army into the Golden Temple caused great pain not only to the Sikhs but to all well-meaning believers as well as atheists The Akal Takht is a symbol of the fight against oppression The damage done to it was a painful thing for everyone The question is Could it have been avoided? Yes, it could have been

Bhindranwala was a card which both the Congress and the Akalis wanted to use against each other The Congress brought Bhindranwala into politics while the Akalis allowed him to make the Akal Takht his home and to arm it heavily violating all Sikh traditions This game of using the Bhindranwala card continued even when with the help of Shabeq Singh, an ex-Army officer dismissed for corruption, he began converting the entire Golden Temple into an armed fortress and also when he began training terrorists inside the Darbar Sahib sending them out and letting them return for safe refuge after killings

The Congress rulers of the time allowed arms to be smuggled into the Golden Temple And the Akali leaders who controlled the Golden Temple denied that there were any terrorists or arms in it even when everyone, even a child, could see machine guns installed on the walls of the Golden Temple Persons residing in the top storeys of the residential buildings could see the most horrible and abominable things going on there A devout Sikh residing in one of such

The author is a nationally acclaimed CPI leader of Punjab renowned for his courageous fight against Khalistani secessionism buildings cried "If such things are to be done in a most sacred religious place in the name of religion, perhaps it is better to be an atheist." Be that as it may, leaders of each of the two parties thought that it was using Bhindranwala against the other while Bhindranwala rightly thought that it was using both for his own ends. It was such a dirty game going on and on. And it was this that led to 'Operation Bluestar'. For at least two days the Army called upon Bhindranwala to come out and surrender, but he refused

From the above it should be clear to everyone that but for Bhindranwala's own game and both the Congress and the Akalis helping him in it with the foolish hope of scoring over the other in the fight for vote-banks, that would have been no 'Operation Bluestar'.

The responsibility for this, therefore, is of Bhindranwala as well as of the Congress rulers and Akalis. Bhindranwala died Neither Indira Gandhi herself nor Rajiv Gandhi on his behalf apologised. Nor have the Akalis Sonia was then a housewife After Rajiv's death, she did not join politics Now when she has entered politics, she has expressed her anguish. Why attack her for that? Maybe she has done it for votes Let Tohra, who was the Chairman of the SGPC, apologise for his responsibility That would help the Akalis too in the matter of votes but that would be an honest act, nevertheless

As regards the shameful anti-Sikh riots which followed the assassination of Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi more than anybody else owed an apology not only to the Sikhs but to India as a whole Unfortunately, he did not If Sonia Gandhi on entering politics has expressed her sorrow and grief, why should those who had been demanding apology all along ridicule it? Voters themselves can take into account its timing

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THE Congress has apologised in connection with the demolition of the Babri Masjid The Congress owed an apology not for the actual demolition but for the deliberate failure of the Narasimha Rao Government to prevent this demolition and earlier by helping those out to demolish it by opening the doors of the Babri Masjid to one community, by *shilanyas*, etc It was demolished by *kar-sewaks* of the *Sangh Parivar* who were organised by the RSS, the BJP and other members of the *parivar* and who marched to Ayodhya with the declared intention of demolishing it Their slogan while marching to Ayodhya was something like this *"Ek dhakka aur do, Babri Masjid tor do"*

Narasimha Rao, the then Prime Minister, and his collegues who did not oppose him cannot be absolved of the responsibility Nor can Rajiv Gandhi, Arun Nehru and Boota Singh for their roles for the sake of votes But the chief culprit was clearly and surely the BJP whose leaders supervised and hailed the physical demolition At first Bajpai, the 'liberal', made a mild criticism but later he too justified it

The Congress should have apologised much earlier If it has done only now, it cannot blame those who say that it has done it for votes But why does the BJP refuse to apologise? Why does Advani say that they will never apologise? For the simple reason that the *Sangh Parivar* has not given up its plans to demolish Masjids in Mathura and Varanasi too While this admittedly remains on the agenda of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and some other members of the *Sangh Parivar,* the BJP only says· "It is not on our agenda just now" The same game was played in relation to the Babri Masjid for quite sometime No apology can be offered for the demolition of the Babri Masjid because demolition of more Masjids followed by riots and what not is seen as a way to establish a *Hindu Rashtra* in India, the openly proclaimed objective of the RSS No top BJP leader belonging to the RSS dare declare that he is not bound to obey the orders of the RSS guru And let it not be forgotten that there is no democracy within the RSS and the BJP is only its political wing The BJP, therefore, cannot apologise for demolishing the Babri Masjid even though it is very keen to win over the Muslims

The most ridiculous is the position of the Akali leaders who declare loudly that the Congress *alone* is responsible for the demolition of the Babri Masjid Badal perhaps does not want to be embarrassed by being reminded that he had called upon the Akalis to accompany the *kar sewaks* who were going to Ayodhya for demolishing the Babri Masjid The memory of the people, however, is not so short as to forget that the top BJP leaders had been hailing for quite sometime the demolition of the Babri Masjid by their *kar sewaks* under their noses The Akalis are, therefore, only reducing their own credibility by holding the Congress solely responsible, by attacking it for apologising now (for votes) and by completely absolving the BJP, the chief culprit in the matter

The controversy over apologies may or may not help any party to get more votes But it is certainly helping voters to see how speaking the truth becomes a casualty in the elections ■

Retain Article 356 with Suitable Amendments

P.K. CHATTERJEE

The question whether the provisions of Article 356 of the Constitution should or should not be retained has assumed importance due to the instances of abuse of the emergency powers in the past fortyseven years of its operation But in the innumerable instances of its use (about 107 times), there are instances when the powers were rightly used Of course, more often it was abused for political purposes To take a decision whether it should be deleted altogether from the Constitution or retained after duly amending it to provide for safeguards against its abuse, we must eliminate the basic weaknesses in this provision which lays it open to abuse If it cannot be repaired only then it has to be discarded I wish to make a few submissions from this point of view

First of all it was not proper to just copy the controversial Section 93 of the Government of India Act 1935, which was discarded immediately after independence, and restore it in the Constitution Section 93 of the Government of India Act 1935 was deleted by the amendments carried out by the India (Provisional Constitution) Order 1947 and three other orders all with effect from August 14, 1947 When in the draft Constitution the same Section 93 was sought to be reintroduced as Article 356 (Article 278 of the draft) alongwith Articles 352 and 355, strong objections were raised by members like H N Kunzru, H V Kamath and others in the Constituent Assembly Dr Ambedker said

> I may say that there is possibility of these Articles being abused or employed for political purposes But that objection applies to every part of the Constitution which gives power to the Centre to override the province

He expressed the hope that

> such Articles will never be called into operation and they would remain dead letter (CAD, Vol 9, page 175)

We know to our cost what happened in fact

The emergency provisions of the Constitution were introduced at the fag end of the session in the Constituent Assembly and the debate on them was scanty Hence there was a lack of thorough deliberation on the possible mischiefs that could be caused by abuse of these powers and the extent of damage that could take place due to the wide and vague language of the Article Further, making the proclamation of emergency under Article 356 depending on the subjective satisfaction of the President restricted judicial review Then again, the main machinery through whom the powers under Articles 356 are used is the Governor No debate whatsoever took place in the Constituent Assembly on the role of the Governor in the context of Article 356

The author is a Senior Advocate of the Supreme Court

The time has come for an in-depth analysis and a full debate on the operation of Article 356 of the Constitution Article 356 of the Constitution may be retained, but the powers of the Central Government to act under the Article must be clearly enumerated and defined The circumstances broadly must be specified, as in Article 352, as to when the proclamation can be issued by the President

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THE Government of India Act 1935 was not designed to govern any sovereign democratic republic It was designed and enacted by the British Parliament to pacify the militant demand for self-government in a colony by transferring as little as possible of the governmental powers to the Indian hands and even in those fields which were apparently transferred to elected representatives of the people, to retain the ultimate control and the whip-hand of the British Parliament through the institution of the Governor and the Governor-General and provisions like those of Section 93 But the State Governments now are elected by the people and these are not subordinate to the Central Government Hence Article 356 even if retained should be amended to make its provisions applicable only in cases of grave and real emergencies

We must remember democracy means self-government, not good government Hence powers under Article 356 cannot be allowed to be used to enforce good government in a State This has been made clear by the Supreme Court

Our democracy is still to mature and take firm roots Innumerable instances of misuse of the powers under Article 356 for political purposes as a means for capturing power prove this The lowering of political morality in the country has also weakened our democratic system Thirdly, in the course of the last fifty years no healthy conventions have been established which might carry forward the moral code to ensure discipline and restraint essential for a democratic system to succeed Hence a provision like Article 356 should remain in the Constitution for some more time

The federal democratic form is the basic feature of our Constitution Federalism in the ultimate analysis is decentralisation of power The people of the State will participate in administering their State That is the objective Gandhiji had envisaged that each village shall be self-administered and become self-sufficient Article 356 strikes against this basic feature of federalism Hence the need for defining and restricting its scope to such emergencies when that basic federalism in the government is threatened in any particular State

We must also be alive to the secessionist activities in many of our border regions Short of armed rebellion these open and covert underground currents are visible in many regions If any State Government is unable to cope with such problems there must be some provision to combat such threats to the integrity of the country For all these reasons retention of Article 356 appears to be desirable at the moment

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BUT limitations on powers under Article 356 are necessary We have seen in the last 47 years that most common instances of abuse of the power have taken place when the party ruling at the Centre is different from the party ruling in the State Now the time has come when we have to expect that different parties will command majority in the States and at the Centre The game of toppling duly elected State Governments must be prevented

Another basic feature of our Constitution is the fundamental rights guaranteed to the citizens This is a basic necessity in view of the multi-lingual, multi-religious, pluralistic composition of our society If in any State, the government is unable to maintain the guarantee or deliberately abrogates the fundamental rights of the citizens or discriminates against a section of the people on religious grounds, that destroys the basic feature of our democracy Similarly, if the government of the State is deliberately deviating from the Directive Principles of the State Policy, an emergency can be said to have come into existence But the grounds to proclaim emergency to dismiss the elected government must be substantial and sufficient

It was stated in the debates before the Constituent Assembly that the Central Government must give warning to the concerned State Government before it acts under Article 356 to dismiss it It is suggested that this requirement may be left to practice

The proclamation issued by the President under Article 356 has to be justifiable The trend of the decisions of the Supreme Court of India appears to say 'yes' to this question though it is not explicit or clear In the latest decision in the case of S R Bommai versus Union of India the rationale of the majority verdict is difficult to discern The provisions for subjective satisfaction of the President inhibits judicial review

Article 356 should be amended and its language should be made specific as in Article 352, after the Fortyfourth Amendment

The Supreme Court has held that in case of malafide and illegal dismissal, the Court has powers to restore the elected government back to power But inordinate delay may render this remedy infructuous specially if fresh elections are held in the meantime It is, therefore, essential that the Central Government should publish the grounds on which a State Government has been dismissed under Article 356 within ten days of the issuance of the proclamation This requirement must be specifically provided in the Article itself

A tentative draft of clause (1) of Article 356 is suggested

(1) When the President has sufficient reasons to believe that grave emergency exists in a State whereby the integrity of India is threatened by secessionist activity or the democratic federal form of the government established by the Constitution is threatened or the government of the State is being conducted in a manner which violates the basic features of the Constitution, the President may by proclamation

Second Proviso Provided further that the grounds on which the proclamation is issued shall be published in the official gazette within ten days of the issuance of such a proclamation

Governor

THE main instrumentality through which the President acts under Article 356 is the Governor There is now almost a general consensus that this institution needs a thorough overhaul if we want powers under Article 356 to be used only in real and grave emergencies

Following questions arise in this connection

(a) What should be his qualifications and disqualifications? Article 157 of the Constitution prescribes nothing except that he must be a citizen of India

(b) How should he be selected, by whom, and by what process? By a Parliamentary Committee?

(c) What should be his tenure and how should he be removed? By a Parliamentary Committee?

(d) Should the Governor be elected? The Constituent Assembly rejected the suggestion mainly because it was apprehended that if both the offices of the Chief Minister and the Governor are elected, there would be possibility for conflict between them But we must reconsider it now If the office of the President and the Prime Minister can be elected, why not the Governor and the Chief Minister?

Qualifications and disqualifications of the Governor should have emerged in this long period of half a century through healthy conventions established in the light of the opinions expressed in the Constituent Assembly

Alladi K Aiyer said

> I have no doubt that a convention will grow up of the Government of India consulting the State

Jawaharlal Nehru said

> eminent people, sometimes people who have not taken too great a part in politics, there may be an eminent educationist or persons eminent in other walks of life who would naturally be cooperating fully with the government, nevertheless represent before the public someone slightly above the party (*CAD*, Vol 3, p 455)

The Rajamannar Committee said

> They should always be appointed in consultation with the State Cabinet The other alternative is to appoint in consultation with a high powered body specially constituted

A person who is or has been an active member of a political party should be expressly disqualified The selection should be by a Parliamentary Committee though he may be formally appointed by the President

The tenure of the Governor is precarious Article 155 makes his tenure last during the "pleasure of the President" Seervai said

> It is enough to say that the tenure of the Governor's office at the pleasure of the President which means, in effect, the Union Government, is most unsatisfactory

The Governor, it is suggested, may be appointed for a fixed term of five years, and he should not be eligible for a second term He may be removed by a resolution passed by Parliament

V R Krishna Iyer has opined

> The Governor must be a person of high calibre, independent judgment, esteemed in society, formally appointed by the President and selected by a national mechanism for scrutiny

He suggested the mechanism of the Inter-State Council envisaged in Article 263 of the Constitution for the purpose

The consent of the State should always be taken for the appointment of the Governor to avoid any conflict

All these questions require again a detailed examination However, one point is clear if the Governors are allowed to be under the control of the Central Government, as they are now, abuse of Article 356 will be difficult to prevent

Article 356 has yet an important role to play in preserving the democratic structure of our polity and we should give it a further chance by amending it suitably to prevent its abuse as far as possible ■

[The question whether Article 356 of the Constitution should be retained or deleted was discussed recently at a meeting of the Citizens for Democracy which was attended by a number of lawyers, professors, politicians and social workers I had the advantage of listening to their opinions, though tentatively expressed, on the issue I have revised this article in the light of the discussions which took place at that meeting, though the views expressed in the article are entirely mine —*P K C*]

Article 356—the Bete Noire *of Federalism*

K. CHANDRAMOULI

V. K Madhavan Kutty says in *Mainstream* (November 15, 1997)

> The original 'sin' of invoking Article 356 was committed in Kerala in 1959 where a popularly elected government enjoying absolute majority belonging to an Opposition party (the undivided Communist Party of India) was dismissed by the Centre It is only a coincidence that Narayanan hails from Kerala! Since then this provision has been misused by all those who came to power at the Centre Those who pledged to have a fresh look at this provision of the Constitution were incapable of doing anything except appointing committee after committee and in the meanwhile using this handy weapon to perpetuate their rule and authority

A popularly elected Opposition's attempt to form a government was thwarted in our own subcontinent a decade later resulting in the dismembering of Pakistan

It appears now that regional parties from various States in India having come recently to form a United Front at the Centre, Article 356 needs to be amended to give true autonomy to the federating units A strong Union at the Centre is necessary for defence of the country, for foreign affairs and diplomacy at international levels and to preserve unity in diversity of the various federating units, as also to level up the raging disparities in the living conditions of the Indian citizens spread out everywhere, including the adivasis Rivers of the country can no longer be dammed or mainly utilised by upper riparian States nor the forest wealth depleted by unilateral State hunger Schedules of Lists I, II and III have to be re-drawn in the light of the changed conditions sooner than later

The author, a retired Advocate and Joint Registrar of the Supreme Court, is the Secretary, Independent Initiative

Hung Parliaments will be the order of the days to come and coalition governments with multi-party unity may have to lead the country at the Centre In such a situation Article 356, as it stands today and as it has been used or misused till date, bears no relevance It should be amended even to enable the President to form a National Government of all major parties and run the government for a full term of five years should, at any time, a coalition government is made to fall due to the machinations of the supporting parties No mid-term elections!

India is still archaic and believes only in dynastic rule A time will soon come when people may no longer tolerate such a hegemony like the kings and princes of old And people's power should be nurtured in the right direction by sane leadership sans ego, personal pelf or profit—the true Gandhians from anywhere taking power into their hands as a trust too sacred to be misused or abused

The fiftieth year of independence should open the eyes and ears and the minds of the intelligentsia of Bharat ■

Publications with a Message

G S. BHARGAVA

The January-March issue of *Vidura*, the journal of the Press Institute of India, was devoted to viewing Gandhiji as a journalist in connection with the fiftieth anniversary of his assassination Ajit Bhattacharjea, the editor, called Gandhiji a journalist with a mission, on the basis of his use of the medium for creating social change through promotion of mass awareness There can be no dispute about it that the newspapers, and now the electronic medium, are the most effective means of spreading a message But everybody cannot be Gandhiji and will not have the credibility and reach which he enjoyed Nor can journalism be a mission in the context of its being an industry as it is now Even in those days, the daily newspapers would reproduce his *Harijan* articles because even with a circulation of 40,000—unprecedented for a publication of that type—its reach was limited As H Y Sharada Prasad pointed out, "its articles were widely reproduced in newspapers all over India"

Like Gandhiji's *Young India* and *Harijan*, there are publications with a message, even if it is not always lofty Among them, *Janata* weekly published from Bombay was an organ of the Socialist Party in the 1950s After the Socialist Party had gone through frequent mutations and ultimately ended up in the 1977 Janata Party and the latter edition of Janata Dal, it speaks for what is called the socialist movement Professor Madhu Dandavate was its editor until he became the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission Now Surendra Mohan, described as the ideologue of the Janata Dal, and G G Parikh, a Janata Dal leader of Mumbai, are editing it but it rarely receives the attention it deserves

The reasons first, not many established writers contribute to the periodical not merely because it will be a labour of love Its reach is far too limited, if at all, to tempt one to make use of it as a vehicle of communication Even its editors have to recycle their writings in the commercial publications to receive attention for their views Not that serious writing in the daily newspaper fares better but at least a section of the readers notice it to congratulate the author that they have 'seen' his/her article in it

Secondly, unable to attract advertisements—not because of an aversion for them as in Gandhiji's case—*Janata* and its likes cannot shed their lean and lanky look which in turn affects their acceptability as an advertisement medium In other words, to parody Sarojini Naidu's jibe about the expensiveness of keeping Gandhiji poor, the cost in effort and purpose of taking a leaf from Gandhiji, in the larger aspect of newspaper running, will be too high

A D Gorwala, a highly principled ICS officer who quit his Secretary's post opposing decontrol of food-grain distribution in 1948, had a publication called *Opinion* I once asked him the purpose of running it Pat came the reply "to educate the editors", which cannot be everybody's cup of tea It was a beacon of light during the dark days of the 1975 Emergency until it was snuffed out

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OTHER similar publications like *Organiser* and *Panchajanya* of the RSS, *People's Democracy* of the CPI-M and the Communist Party's *New Age* also fall in the same category but because of the nature of the organisations sponsoring them, they have something to say and are read for that reason Being mouthpieces of cadre-based organisations, they also act as one-way conveyer belts For instance, to this day in his eightyfourth year, E M S Namboodiripad writes regularly for the Malayalam publication of his party partly because he is not active in politics An Atal Behari Vajpayee or an L K Advani cannot afford to, so, although the *Organiser* is lucky to have a writer of the stature of Madhav Kamath contributing regularly for it For instance, his piece in a recent issue of the weekly on Sonia Gandhi's electioneering is penetrating without being unbalanced or abusive

To cut the rigmarole short, just as it is wasteful to walk long distances when motorised and other means of transport are available, making a mission of journalism in these days of mass communication can only be a gesture To recall a cartoon in a Telugu daily in a different context, the Congress leader says to Gandhiji 'Sorry, you are not of much use in this election and so I am going in for a different type of Gandhi ' This does not mean that the norms observed by Gandhiji in his role as a journalist are also starry-eyed Credibility is the life-breath of a journalist, to preserve which one has to stick to unfashionable practices (in today's context) like fairness in reporting and balance in approach without being dull and off-putting

Talking of balance, one wonders if the conclusion in some newspaper headlines and television reports that Advani had conceded that Sonia Gandhi had changed the election scenario is justified He said in the reported interview that her campaigning had put some life into 'a dying Congress' but that it was not going to improve its election prospects He even claimed it was a welcome development for the BJP ■

Revolutionary Violence cannot respect Civil Liberties

GEORGE FERNANDES

This article by the noted political leader and parliamentarian was written several months ago and sent to Mainstream *for publication. But it did not reach the* Mainstream *office as it was sent to the old office address However, as the article has not lost its relevance it is being belatedly published here Readers should bear in mind that this article does not address the manner in which violence perpetrated by upper-caste outfits like the Ranvir Sena in Bihar should be dealt with by political groups or mass organisations functioning in the affected areas* —Editor

It had begun on January 10, 1997 with a joint statement from the President of the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), K G Kannabiran, and Dr Y P Chhibbar, the PUCL General Secretary They had called the CPI-ML to rethink their politics and announce suspension of violence They had also called upon the government to halt all brutal practices going under the name of maintaining "public order" and "law and order".

It was a whiff of fresh air But hardly anyone noticed it And those as may have noticed it, did not care for it Such is the insensitivity to human life that has overtaken the Indian intelligentsia The political establishment of the country has veered round to the idea that power has to be exercised with ruthless suppression of those who question the unscrupulous means and ends of those wielding it Human rights and civil liberties have indeed become dirty words for India's power-wielding elite

While the rulers were revelling in the arrogance of power and were devising more sadistic ways of dealing with those fighting for justice from the ruthless nexus of politicians-businessmen-bureaucrats, the human rights activists seem to have engaged themselves in serious debate on questions of ends and means, and violence and non-violence At a two-day conference on "Civil Liberties and Revolutionary Violence" held in Hyderabad on June 15-16, 1997 under the auspices of the Andhra Pradesh Civil Liberties Conference, one saw the fallout of the churning that was taking place over various aspects of the theme that was up for discussion

This time around it was not a whiff of fresh air It was a powerful blast that could not be overlooked even by the most cynical and arrogant members of the political establishment Again it was K G Kannabiran who set the ball rolling by asserting that "the civil rights movement cannot rub shoulders with any violent movement that aspires for political and material power" Coming from a man who has spent a lifetime defending every violence-prone political activist around, it must indeed have sounded like the supersonic crack of the sound-barrier

Dr Balagopal who, over the years, has been an upholder of violence to counter state violence of every form against the poor and the deprived mass of people, did not mince words when he condemned "organised political movements" for oppressing poor, innocent villagers His statement that "one cannot justify such violence in the name of the people, nor can people be equated with the organisation itself" underscored the obvious that there was no justification for killing the poor and the innocent which is what most "revolutionary" outfits have been doing in many parts of the country In Bihar, for instance, the Maoist Coordination Committee (MCC) has killed several thousand small peasants, agricultural labourers and other poor including some 500 odd Muslim peasants, in the name of revolutionary activity And what is most reprehensible, all this has been done courtesy the blessings of Laloo Yadav who has been using the MCC to liquidate individuals and groups who are opposed to his politics of caste manipulation, loot of the treasury, and organised lawlessness by the state

The man whose voice was sharp and clear was

Ajit Kumar Bhuiyan, Chairman of the Manab Adhikar Sangram Samiti of Assam and Editor of *Pratidin*, the largest selling daily newspaper in Assamese language Bhuiyan, who has been in and out of jail several times for his bold stand on state violence against the people, and has both the state and the believers in the cult of violence gun for him, urged the civil liberties movement to distance itself from groups which aimed at struggle for land and power He emphasised that civil liberties' organisations "should not become a platform for either sectarianism or mutual contradictions"

True, Bhuiyan made a distinction between insurgencies and, what he described as, "nationality struggles" that are in evidence in many parts of the country. His point was that these struggles are but "an expression of the people's determination to have their political rights" While he agreed that these struggles were a threat to the unity and integrity of the country, he justified them by asserting that they were "occasioned by injustice to some regions and sections of the people"—a fact which cannot be disputed Every insurgency in the North-Eastern States in India is born out of the criminal neglect of the people of this region by the bandits ensconced in the permanent and transitional governments in Delhi.

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If those engaged in violent movements have reasons enough to justify their activities, there are groups of politicians, bureaucrats, police and arms merchants who have a vested interest in all these insurgencies and other violent movements For them these movements provide opportunities to make easy money and slip into positions from where they can exercise power, without being accountable to the people The recent bogus crusade by that bottom-pincher policeman by the name of K PS. Gill of Punjab, in support of state violence against the people, is the most hideously obscene example of how the establishment looks at human life

If in the name of fighting against the injustice done to the Sikh people, some of the so-called militants turned into brigands who terrorised innocent Sikhs into parting with their money and property and who indulged in most shameless and brutal acts of rape and extortion, the men in uniform led by the likes of K PS Gill and his ilk committed the same crimes with unbridled gusto which the power of their khaki uniforms and automatic weapons enabled them to display The wayward Sikh youth got killed But those in khaki uniforms went on to accumulate ill-gotten money and other wealth and to pinch women's bottoms and do things far worse And they kept killing a large number of innocent persons to become eligible for awards

The most important thing which gun-wielders from both sides seem to forget is that, for all its faults, India has a democratic structure which provides the people with opportunities to resist violence through peaceful means It is not all that long ago that the All Assam Students' Union led a movement whose peaceful and non-violent character and sweep astonished the whole world It was civil disobedience at its quintessential best, and it achieved its purpose without a shot being fired

The defiance of Mrs Indira Gandhi's Emergency by the Sikhs of Punjab is another example of civil disobedience in its pristine glory Every day, hundreds of men, women and children made a mockery of Mrs Gandhi's dictatorship by coming out of the Golden Temple and courting arrest after parading in the streets of Amritsar, with the dictator's armed forces not knowing how to deal with the peaceful protestors

The minions of the state should also bear in mind that the khaki uniform or Article 311 does not give them licence to plunder, loot and rape They should not presume that they are the descendants of pindaris who have the right to pillage They are paid their salaries from the money of the tax payers—that is every citizen just born, to every citizen who has just died. Nor should the minions presume that they are above the law and it is they alone who know what is good for the country. Patriotism is not the prerogative of these public servants There is more to patriotism than shooting on unarmed people—workers, farmers, students and the socially and economically deprived sections of our people

The debate initiated at the Hyderabad conference on "Civil Liberties and Revolutionary Violence" should be continued and raised to higher levels of discourse all over the country Concerned persons should take the dialogue into the camps of those who believe that violence is the only way of dealing with India's rotten establishment, even when it is the poor and deprived who are the victims of that violence

The biggest hurdle in the way of such dialogue will be the vested interests, whether in khaki or in khadi or in safari suits and Rayban glasses A sustained effort will succeed in demolishing the hurdles and in bringing all sides in the ongoing conflicts to sit down and talk When that happens, it will be a moment of triumph for the democratic movements in the country, including those revolutionaries who are presently slugging it out with the gun For, when all the forces of social, economic and political change who are today at cross purposes unite, the criminalised establishment of the day must run for cover ■

LETTER FROM GANGTOK

Happenings in Rumtek Monastery

AMITAVA MUKHERJEE

Finally politics on the Himalayas is unfolding its dimensions The Dalai Lama, the exiled Tibetan religio-political head, has announced that he is not averse to the idea of 'true autonomy' for the Forbidden Land China has also for the first time given a clear indication of its conditions for negotiations on this point There are also reports that exchanges of ideas have started between the communist giant and the Dalai Lama after many years The development has surprised many foreign policy watchers but not those who are familiar with the goings-on in Sikkim, more particularly the developments that have taken place in an extremely important Buddhist monastery at Rumtek, nearly twentyfour kilometres away from Gangtok

A visit to the monastery was truly rewarding It was a cool afternoon in Rumtek, the present international headquarters of the Kagyu sect of Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism, situated on a 5000 feet plus elevation in the eastern Himalayas A number of young lamas were moving around in the huge courtyard Who is the head of this institution?—one asks a lama "He is the Karmapa," the latter replies. But what is his real name? No one is prepared to come forward with the reply As the questioner persists one lama suddenly flares up "You have come from India to see the monastery Have a look and clear away The Karmapa is Karmapa What would you do with his real name?" The lama becomes red-faced in anger

But that was not all At a far corner of the compound another young lama suddenly appears. "I am from Nepal. I have come to study Buddhism here You were asking about the name of the Karmapa His name is Ugyen Thinley Dorjee Don't be too inquisitive about the monastery with everybody There is subterranean tension here " The lama vanishes

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In fact the happenings in Rumtek gave the first hint that the Dalai Lama was becoming soft towards China He willingly got himself enmeshed in a controversy which, a few years back, he was certain to avoid Since the Rumtek monastery has a tremendous strategic importance—with a large number of Sikkim's Lepcha-Bhutia community coming under its direct influence—the Dalai Lama's actions had an ominous portent for India But as it always happens, the lethargic Foreign Ministry of the Government of India was slow to grasp the import of his actions and therefore late to react But by that time China had firmly taken control of the Rumtek monastery

It may be recalled here that Kagyu is regarded by many as the second most important religio-political sect in Tibet after the Geluk order which the Dalai Lama leads Although it may have less than one-fifth of the Tibetans under its fold, with the Dalai Lama's sect accounting for well over seventy per cent of the population, Kagyu is extremely flush with wealth with more than 50,000 foreign followers and nearly one million dollar as yearly donations from abroad. Moreover the Karmapa, the head of the Kagyu sect, is regarded as the third in the Tibetan religio-political hierarchy With the Dalai Lama at a very advanced age and the Panchen Lama, the second most powerful leader who was pressured into backing the Chinese occupation forces after 1959, having expired in 1989, the Karmapa can be a very useful instrument who can lend a helping hand in legitimising China's occupation of the Forbidden Land

But the problem in Rumtek originated from the fact that Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism believes in transmigration of souls and all the preceding Karmapas barring the 16th left a letter of prediction which gave clear hints about physical identifications of their successors The Karmapa lineage, which predates the Dalai Lama's by over 300 years, is said to be an unbroken succession of reincarnations that began almost 900 years ago The first Karmapa, Dhusum Khyenpa (1110 AD-1193 AD) left hints of the circumstances of his rebirth in verses full of cryptic clues, thus beginning the tradition of prediction letters And all the Karmapas succeeding him in turns were identified in their childhood on the basis of such prediction letters It is, however, still a mystery whether the 16th Karmapa had really left any such letter The probability factor indicates he had not

This opened a floodgate of international chessboard moves in a strategic Indian State Structurally speaking, after the Karmapa there are four Regents or High Lamas in the Rumtek monastery Of them Tai Situ Rinpoche had a clear Chinese inclination, a pointer to the fact that the communist giant had been active in Sikkim since long In the midst of a controversy over Tibet in the mid-eighties Tai Situ had eulogised the Chinese leaders this way

> From the depth of my heart I thank the two leaders of China, Hu Yaobang and Deng Xiaoping , for their political stance which is excellent and impressive

His utterances, however, went largely unnoticed in India's Ministry of External Affairs and the High Lama had an open field in front of him towards playing a much bigger role in China's grand designs

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THE 16th Karmapa died in 1981. But for nearly a decade after his death there was no talk about any prediction letter left by him Then suddenly in 1989 Tai Situ wrote to other High Lamas intimating that he had 'good news similar to the joyful cries of peacocks' But he desisted from giving details of his 'good news' and kept mum till 1992 when at a meeting of the four Regents he produced what he claimed to be the 16th Karmapa's prediction letter

Tai Situ disclosed that eleven months before his death the preceding Karmapa had given him an amulet saying it would lead to great benefit But he could not explain why he did not open it till 1989 More important was the question as to why he chose to withhold the contents of the prediction letter, which he had found inside the amulet, till 1992 Anyway as per Tai Situ's version, the prediction letter read

> In the east of the land of snow, in a country where divine thunder spontaneously blazes/In a beautiful nomad's place with the sign of a cow/The method is Dondrup and the wisdom is Lolaga/Born in the year of the one used for the earth.

It was then decoded in the following manner

> In eastern Tibet, at a place called Lhathok (in Tibetan Lha means divine and Thok is thunder), in the nomadic community of Bakor (Ba meaning cow), to Dondrup and Lolaga born in the Wood-Ox year or 1985

But Tai Situ did not have a smooth sailing Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche, a nephew of the 16th Karmapa with a distinct leaning towards India, questioned the authenticity of the prediction letter He also told that the handwriting of the letter as well as the signature did not quite match that of the 16th Karmapa Two other Regents, namely, Jagmon Kongtrul Rinpoche and Goshir Gyaltsab Rinpoche, agreed with Shamar. It was then decided that Kongtrul who was scheduled to visit Tibet shortly would lead a search party and try to get at the truth

This was decided in the meeting of the High Lamas in March 1992 and Kongtrul was to go to Tibet in the first week of May But on April 26 his car dashed against a tree killing him on the spot His death poured cold water on the attempt to untie the knot surrounding the prediction letter But it gave rise to queries about the behind the scene happenings

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SHARING a cup of coffee at a Gangtok restaurant an Indian intelligence official expressed reservations about the developments that had taken place before and after Kongtrul's death "The High Lama was expected in Tibet by the first week of May But the abbot of the Tsurphu monastery revealed that he had seen a search party of six leaving for east Tibet as early as April 6 and Ugyen Thinley Dorjee was traced and photographed by them as early as April 24, well before Kongtrul's scheduled arrival Moreover, Beijing arranged transport for the questionable search party and Chinese officials accompanied the convoy that brought Ugyen Thinley from his east Tibet home, that is, Kalek monastery, to the one in Tsurphu," the official averred It might be interesting here to note that as early as 1991 Tai Situ had paid a visit to Kalek where Ugyen Thinley was then a boy lama But the matter did not end here On June 27, 1992 the Chinese Government organised a grand ceremony in Tsurphu to approve the 17th Karmapa's accession The Beijing Government's statement read out in the ceremony pointed out that the Karmapas had "constantly paid tribute to Chinese emperors" from 1271 AD to 1911 AD and that all the religious appointments in Tibet had to have the consent of Beijing

While the Chinese were thus making a steady advance in Sikkim, the Government of India, and more particularly its Ministry of External Affairs, was spending its unlimited time merrily As it always happens, South Block woke up very late and also from the wrong side of the bed In 1994 Shamar, obviously with the help of New Delhi, robed another boy named Tenzin Chentse as the 17th Karmapa at another grand ceremony in India's capital city Shamar put forward a story that Chentse, discovered on the basis of a vision that he had in 1986, was originally born in Tibet and has been smuggled out from the Forbidden City. His ability to recount events of his past life proved that he was the actual reincarnation

But neither Shamar nor the dandies in South Block took note of the vital deciding factor in any such game of one-upmanship—the Dalai Lama Tai Situ moved fast and with precision He just roped in the Dalai Lama to his side and, to be more precise, to the side of China He had already obtained the Dalai Lama's informal approval of Ugyen Thinley over fax This approval was later formalised

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THIS has raised a million dollar question why was the Dalai Lama in a hurry to approve Ugyen Thinley? More than anyone else it was he who must have been in the know of the controversy going on over the question of 16th Karmapa's succession In addition, the Karmapa lineage is much older than that of the Dalai Lama and it forms a totally different sect Logically speaking, the Dalai Lama should not have any role in any approval or disapproval of the Karmapa

Observers believe that there can be one very plausible explanation the Dalai Lama was already considering the question of extending the olive branch to Beijing and the Rumtek controversy gave him a chance to make the first beginning The developments at the fag end of 1997 prove beyond doubt that the monk is no more that belligerent

With Ugyen Thinley Dorjee firmly in control China has definitely stolen a big march over India not just in Rumtek but in Sikkim as well The Dalai Lama is old The Panchen Lama is no more So if the probable deal with the Dalai Lama, the contours of which are still in the process of taking shape, does not materialise, China can fall back upon Ugyen Thinley Dorjee for giving legitimacy to its occupation of Tibet when the present Dalai Lama is no more or till the time when the next Dalai Lama comes of age But for India it is no doubt a perilous situation considering the fact that Sikkim's ethnic balance is on a powderkeg ■

Social Meaning of Inter-Faith Dialogue

THOMAS MATTHAI

Is it any the easier for a Buddhist, than for others, to relate to religions not his own? The question is prompted by a recent award presented to the Dalai Lama for his contribution to inter-faith dialogue and cooperation—an award in memory of the Orthodox Bishop Paulos Mar Gregorios

The answer is provided by the Tibetan leader himself He was asked

> As a religious leader, are you interested in actively encouraging others to join your faith?

He replied with the usual clarity

> I am interested not in converting other people to Buddhism but in how we Buddhists can contribute to human society, according to our own ideas

In the same interview with his American admirer, he added·

> Philosophical teachings are not the end The aim is to help and benefit others, and philosophical teachings in support are valuable If we go into the differences in philosophy, there will be endless argument, accomplishing nothing Better to look at the purpose of the philosophies and to see what is shared an emphasis on love, compassion and respect for a higher force

Later, receiving the Gregorios Award on November 25, 1997 in New Delhi, the Dalai Lama said

> One must be aware of one's own religion, understand the differences among religions, and then promote respect for each other's religion,

as a necessary basis for a peaceful life together in society

How does a practising Hindu see his faith in relation to other religions? Mahatma Gandhi, whom the Dalai Lama considers his mentor, primarily for his adherence to *ahimsa*, has this to say

> My religion is Hinduism which for me is the religion of humanity and included the best of all religions known to me

He adds.

> I am led to my religion through truth and non-violence To be true to such religion, one has to lose oneself in continuous and continuing service of all in life Something within me tells me that, for all the deep veneration I show to several religions, I am all the more a Hindu, nevertheless for it

Hinduism traditionally has been less inhibited about inter-faith dialogue than most other religions As Swami Vivekananda said,

> The oneness of humanity is the sanction for morality

Tagore's poetic perception complements this principle

> In the region of nature, which is the region of diversity, we grow by acquisition, in the spiritual world, which is the

The author, a Delhi-based political analyst, was formerly editor of the weekly Democratic World *and the quarterly* Future

Paulos Mar Gregorios Award, 1997
for
INTER-FAITH DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION
presented to
His Holiness the Dalai Lama

This is the first of the Awards, instituted by Sophia Society, in the name of the Late Dr Paulos Mar Gregorios It is presented to His Holiness the Dalai Lama for his contribution to peace and harmony, particularly through Inter-Faith Dialogue and Co-operation

The Dalai Lama has shown the way and given a lead to the people of Tibet to face extreme and continuing adversity, with spiritual strength, moral courage and physical endurance His chosen path of non-violence and compassion, truth and love, freedom and responsibility is, at once, spiritual and pragmatic—in the enlightened tradition of the Buddha and in the footsteps of his modern mentor, Mahatma Gandhi

What happens to Tibet, once a plateau of spiritual sunshine, must of course be a concern of its immediate neighbours, China and India, two of our oldest civilisations But the nature, causes and consequences of the situation are not confined to a country or continent They are, as the Dalai Lama urges, a matter of 'universal responsibility' In upholding this truth, the Dalai Lama is not only making a political statement but affirming a spiritual principle And, this is of the essence of all religions that seek to address the basic human problem of suffering, from one cause or another

In his ceaseless quest—on behalf of his people and indeed of all the peoples of the world—for individual freedom, and the responsible exercise of that freedom, the Dalai Lama has constantly been on the move, interacting creatively with religious leaders, political representatives and the common people By describing himself as 'a simple Buddhist monk', he is reminding that "spirituality" is not another distinct profession but resides in the hearts and minds of ordinary men and women

The Dalai Lama has dialogued and remained in touch with the world's religions—Hinduism, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism, among others. He has sought not theological consensus, but a meeting ground to mount a joint effort, locally and on a global scale, to solve common problems

By this very definition and pursuit of *dharma,* the ordering principle of all life, the Dalai Lama has unveiled a hopeful vision of forgiveness and reconciliation towards peace with justice, *'enabling our people to become the co-authors of a new enlightenment'*

November 25, 1997

> region of unity, we grow by losing ourselves in unity

Culturally, Hinduism respects even those who do not have a theory of God, among them some enlightened examples, apart from the Buddha himself Sree Narayana Guru, a social emancipator of Kerala in modern times, was unambiguous in his central message

> Whatever is the religion, man must be good

A contemporary self-confessed agnostic, who is more human than most, Baba Amte, is convinced that

> A man of faith is not necessarily a Hindu or Muslim or Christian Nor is spirituality other-worldly

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In the link between religion and society, the story of Vivekananda's advice to his overworked disciples carries a memorable moral Where is the time, they enquired, to pray, to meditate, to practise yoga, to study Vedanta and to work with the poor in the slums, all in the course of 24 hours? It was almost a century ago and the place Calcutta All right, replied the Swami, go and work with the poor, you can study Vedanta in the next life

For an authentic Muslim view on inter-faith cooperation, one ought to turn for light principally to the Sufi saints and sages, rather than to the strident practitioners of a religion which, in essence, is centred on brotherhood and justice Which was what attracted Guru Nanak, centuries ago, to the then citadel of Islamic learning that was Baghdad

A listening ear can discern many authentic voices of true Islam from within the multireligious context of India "Every religious group has its straight path to God," said Nizamuddin Aulia Another spiritual practitioner, Mirza Mazhar Jan-i-janan, had this advice to give

> You should not see what one worships, only that faith and commitment with which one worships

That indeed reflects the life-supportive spirit that ensured, for example, the peace and mutual respect that prevailed for some 700 years among the Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists in Kashmir, irrespective of the religion of the incumbent ruler

The Christian perspective on inter-faith dialogue would very much depend on who one is interacting with, among the numerous denominations of this widely spread religion, rooted in forgiveness and love Here in India we have the example, over two millennia, of Hindus and Christians living in an extended family in Kerala, joined later by Muslims, without any unsettling social ripple Even the religious-cultural tremors caused by the unexpected arrival on this placid scene, of the Portuguese in the sixteenth century and the British a little later, could not affect the stable social equilibrium

The essential ethos of Christianity is one of prayer and socially meaningful work, not proselytisation but social sharing of spiritual experience In a posthumously published 'spiritual autobiography' Bishop Gregorios is in a contrite mood of introspection

> The net result of my rather extensive ecumenical experience is that I have not been able to spot one Christian Church in the world that is even half-faithful to the way of cross and to the teaching of the Apostles I have gradually begun to look outside the Christian Church, to see what God is doing

Evidently, it is not necessary to repudiate one's religion to respect others Rather the roots need to go deeper, from belief to practice

Spirituality, worth its name, is woven into all the aspects of life—intellectual, moral, social On this, an urbane scholar has this to say with cultivated detachment

> In all religions, the three aspects of *faith*, *knowledge* (about the world and of the meaning of life) and *values* (trusted as guiding rules in daily life) are united by the deep commitment of a religious person to divinity in its different manifestations or, as in Buddhism, to a set of supreme guiding principles and to the enlightenment that can flow from them

Every religion seems to be founded on a universal purpose towards a new humanity, beyond the culture, quality and size of its following Nothing perhaps approximates to this shared motivation more than the concept of *dharma*, which is easier to perceive than to translate into a non-Indian idiom ■

Centenary Tribute to Netaji

NETAJI SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE : STUDIES IN A NEW PERSPECTIVE

by

Dr Panchanan Saha

The book is based on primary and secondary sources containing three essays—(a) Netaji, Germany and Indian Legion, (b) Netaji on Communal Problems of India, (c) Netaji and the Working Class Movement Rare copies of German War archives materials on Indian Legion and Netaji's letter to Ribbentrop are reproduced here

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BOOK REVIEW

A Unique Historic Treatise

BIMAN SEN

A New Advanced History of India by Dr P N Chopra, Professors B N Puri, M N Dass and A C Pradhan, Prentice Hall of India Private Ltd , New Delhi, pages 674, Rs 395

A famous historian once said "History is a tapestry of lies " There is a deep meaning in this statement

A tapestry is a large piece of heavy cloth which has a picture sewn on it using coloured threads Using the same kind of cloth and the same king of threads, a tapestry may look horrible and another may look beautiful and pleasing to the eyes, depending upon the abilities and perception of its creator

A tapestry also means a situation or a sequence of events that is considered to be colourful and complicated because it is made up of many kinds of things or people However, the same situation or sequences of events with the same kind of things or people may create different kinds of impressions or understanding, depending upon the motivation or perception of the narrator This phenomenon is very difficult to comprehend, if one reads different newspapers in the morning. To describe the same situation or sequence of events, different newspapers use different headlines—one may be sensational to rouse the emotion of the people and another may be simple Sometimes, the same situation or sequence of events may even be distorted to the extent of misleading people Each newspaper has its own style of presenting headlines or news depending upon its own policy and/or motivation or the perception of the reporter One must remember that yesterday's events or people make news of 'today' and create materials for future history

One should not also forget that while research in science or technology gives the same solution to the same problem and is not dependent on the personality of an individual research worker, research in history is different as it depends on the ethno-cultural, politico-religious orientation of the research scholar and his/her individual motivation and perception of a particular situation on the sequence of events dealing with the same kind of things or people

The reviewer is a former UNESCO expert on educational planning, and an erstwhile member of the National Commission for History of Science, INSA, etc

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FOR verification of the truth behind the above observation, there is no dearth of examples in Indian or world history The best example one may quote is the history of Emperor Aurangzeb One group of historians think that he was a very pious man, God-fearing, honest and fully committed to the tenets of true Islam and a devout Muslim Whereas another group strongly feels that Aurangzeb was a tyrant, destroyer of Hindu temples, merciless and anti-Hindu A great defect in his character was his religious fanaticism in the service of Islam and religious intolerance of other faiths for which he had to suffer ultimately If, however, one analyses objectively the travel documents of the famous French traveller, Monsieur Bernier, he/she would discover that Emperor Aurangzeb was one of the most tragic figures in the history of India, an unhappy man who had been fighting within himself This aspect of Aurangzeb's character comes out clearly when one reads the conversation between him and his mentor, the Maulavi who trained him from the age of four years, as documented by Mon Bernier in his travel document One side of his personality as inherited from the genes of Akbar the Great and Empress Jodhabai—their sensitivity to human feelings, and the other as metamorphosed by the orthodox Islamic training by his Maulavi The authors of the book under review have taken a broader and more balanced view by synthesising both sides of Aurangzeb's character as a man

The objective of the book is well defined in its preface The authors of *A New Advanced History of India* have adopted a holistic approach to the study of the history of India in all its aspects—polity, administration, economy, society, culture, religion, philosophy, literature, science and art, etc , including India's relations with the neighbouring countries in particular, and the world in general

The structure of the book under review is a three-tier one giving a contour of continuity with change The captions of the three parts are as follows Part I—Ancient India, Part II—Medieval India, and Part III—Modern India Each part is dovetailed into the other for smooth transition from one to the next era covering the total period of 4464 years from 2500 BC to 1964 AD upto the end of the Nehru era

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PART I of the book not only tells the story of the ancient India spanning over 3250 years, that is, from 2500 BC, the beginning of the Indus Valley Civilisation, to 750 AD, the end of the Gupta period, but also speaks of the impact of geographical factors on the making of Indian history and also early medieval India for smooth transition to Part II of the book which deals with the history of Medieval India The first part contains in all fifteen chapters

Chapter one gives an overview of the geographical factors which are responsible for moulding the history of India Chapters two and three deal with the evolution of complex Indian civilisation right from the Indus Valley Civilisation to the post-Gupta period covering a span of 3250 years

One question may be raised in the mind of the readers, as to why the authors have chosen the Indus Valley Civlisation as the starting point of the book—*A New Advanced History of India*? It is perhaps because the Indus Valley and Harappan Civilisation is one of the earliest civlisations known so far The Indus Civilisation was similar to the contemporary civlisation of Mesopotamia (Babylonian) It also gives a clear picture of the rise and fall of a civlisation which obeys the same universal law that guides the destiny of a star—its birth, integrated existence and ultimate disintegration to form a new star

According to the authors, the Indus Valley Civlisation started in 2500 BC, gradually matured and consolidated, and ultimately ended in 1500 BC However, there appears to be survival and continuity of the Indus Valley Civlisation into the local one at Lothal, then gradually integrated into the early Vedic civlisation as recorded in the book

> Besides the archaeological evidence, that from the Rig Veda suggest that the Vedic Aryans were acquainted with the non-Aryan world as also the condition of its life and culture—some of which fits in with the remains unearthed at Mohenjodaro—it is conjectured that the non-Aryans of the Rig Veda might be equated with the people responsible for the Indus Valley Civilisation Confrontation between Aryan and non-Aryan cultures might have resulted in some form of synthesis and many non-Aryan concepts and forms were accepted by the Aryans

In fact, this process led to integration of two cultures resulting in the consolidation of a new Indian civilisation Some people call this process as Aryanisation of India, others call it as Dravidisation of Aryans It took more than a millennium to consolidate the process

To determine the actual relationship of Aryans with India, the authors have diplomatically avoided to enter into any controversy So they have recorded the following in the text

> The Aryan problem in the context of relationship with India as their homeland has been a debatable issue While Western scholars pronounce the Aryans as foreign immigrant, a good many Indians believe them to be of indigenous origin

It is very unfortunate that even in this highly developed age of science and technology, there is no dearth of chauvinists in India having blind faith that everything originated from India and that Indian civlisation is as old as when modern man was not born according to all scientific studies.

The later Vedic civilisation had Kurukshetra as the centre Gradually the seeds of disintegration of harmonious relations in society were sown The flexible approach to the caste system gradually assumed hereditary rigidity and reoriented the Indian Civlisation into a new direction from which India has not yet been able to recover

According to the author, the political situation at the time of the Buddha is suggestive of disintegration which eventually leads to integration This process of integration ultimately consolidated during the Mauryan era when Indian civlisation reached its peak in all spheres of life In Indian history the Mauryan period is perhaps the most glorious According to the assessment of the authors, the Gupta period represents the 'Periclean age' of Indian history noted for intellectual activity, literary achievements, administrative efficiency, economic productivity and social prosperity In an atmosphere of tolerance and broadmindedness, peaceful coexistence was the hall-mark of the time One may say, it was an age of complacence which might have led to a period of confusion and confrontation in the post-Gupta period, and thus opened the floodgate of foreign invasions, etc According to the authors,

> The post-Gupta period no doubt presents a picture of political disunity and disintegration with the vassals and feudal chiefs rising in revolt and setting up their independent kingdoms This chaotic situation plunged the country into the dark age of India, that is, the early medieval age

The first part ends with the genealogical table of the Mauryas, the Kushanas, the early Guptas, the imperial Pratharas, the Palas of Bengal, early Chalukya Kings, the Rashtrakuta Dynasty, the Pallava

Kings and Chola Kings of Tanjore

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PART II of the book covers the history of Medieval India spreading over twenty chapters beginning with chapter sixteen Chapter sixteen gives resumé of the socio-political situation and economic conditions of the country which encouraged the Muslim invaders to undertake the adventure of intruding into India The authors of this book have given an excellent account in this respect which is quoted below

> The rise of Islam and later on the conquest of India is one of those epoch-making events which left a permanent impression on the subsequent stages of her history It is the most important episode in the history of India since the Aryan invasion and it has left radically changed the whole aspect of it as no other event had done or is likely to do in future

Although Arab invaders came first to attack India and had reached the borders of Hindu dominions, it is a matter of surprise that the Arabs, the world conquerors, stopped at the gate of India and failed to enter into India proper In the book the authors have given an overview of the reasons for the failures of Arab rulers in Sindh However, other groups of Muslim invaders of Turkish and Mogul origins were successful in conquering India and established their kingdoms

Part II tells the story of establishment of the Sultanates and the establishment of the most powerful Mogul Empire of which the most distinguished ruler was Akbar the Great who has left a permanent mark in the history of India Part II of the book tells us also the story of the rise and decline of the Great Mogul Empire.

Emperor Ashoka, the greatest son of India, had an empire which extended far beyond the boundary India ever had or will ever have He not only conquered large territories but also conquered culturally the heart of entire Asia The most important feature of Ashoka was that he was the confluence of two great cultures of the time· the oriental culture of India and the Occidental culture of Greece, as he carried in his veins the Indo-Aryan blood inherited from his grandfather and the Greco-Aryan blood from his grandmother, Helen However, after Ashoka, it was Akbar the Great who succeeded in restoring the lost glory of India but only partially Akbar has been well assessed by the authors·

> Akbar ranks with Ashoka as one of the greatest Kings in the history of the world He was a great administrator and organised his empire on a sound basis He completely reversed the policy of the Sultan who had tried to govern the country strictly according to the tenets of Islam

The authors have further recorded the following about Akbar

> An enlightened despot Akbar, it may be said, 'stands' in splendid stature, intellectually and culturally, amidst the pygmies who preceded and followed him His genius and breadth of vision imparted Islam and the Muslim state a new all-inclusiveness All men without distinction of faith or complexion found welcome under the sheltering wings of the state Akbar believed that the Islamic law warranted progressive adjustment in accordance with the growing needs of an ever-changing society He broadened the basis and concept of Islamic polity from communal to Universal Theocracy His contemporaries and even his successors failed to comprehend the proud significance of the change

It is really a pity that even today our leaders have failed to comprehend the philosophy of Akbar and are dividing the country on communal lines

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PART III of the book deals with the modern history of India upto the end of the Nehru era, that is, May 27, 1964

This part is covered in 29 chapters of the book (from chapter 36 to 64) Keeping in tune with the general philosophy of the book, that is, continuity with change, Part III, at the beginning, gives us an overview of the socio-political situation and the economic condition of India which encouraged the European countries to undertake the journey to India First these countries came as traders and gradually they ventured to assume the role of rulers The Portuguese were the first to come, soon followed by the Dutch, then came the English and the French The authors have analysed the factors which were responsible for such a development It may be quoted here

> The eighteenth century saw three important political developments in India, namely, the decline and disintegration of the Mogul Empire, the rise of the regional polities and the establishment of British Rule The Mogul system collapsed because of its inherent internal weaknesses as well as external challenges like the invasion of Nadir Shah and Ahmed Shah Abdali and the bid for supremacy by the English For some time regional powers like the Marathas, Sikhs and Mysore tried to fill up the power vacuum But ultimately the English East India Company succeeded in outwitting all powers, Indian as well as European, and emerged as the all powerful master of India

In this respect, it is felt that the authors while analysing the various factors leading to the above development, missed one important factor, that is India neglected the West and concentrated all its attention to the East It was the West which always took interest in India and increased the interaction with this country and discovered its weaknesses If on the contrary, India, could have taken little interest in the West, they would have discovered, how application of science and technology was rapidly transforming the Western society This is well reflected in Aurangzeb's conversation with his 'Maulavi'

Because of the special expertise with the authors like Dr P N Chopra, the development and growth of the British Raj and their pragmatic policies in various fields of activity have been excellently analysed in the various chapters of Part III of the book This part of the book has also critically examined how the policies of the British Raj had helped India directly in the promotion and rise of nationalism and ultimately reached the goal of independence of India and its development and growth At the onset of India's freedom perhaps the most difficult task for and greatest achievement of the Indian leaders was the smooth integration of the princely states into the domain of the Indian Union.

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THE book ends with a tribute paid to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru by Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, the President of India On May 27, 1964 Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru died. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan paid this tribute to him

> Jawaharlal Nehru was one of the greatest figures of our generation, an outstanding statesman whose services to the cause of human freedom are unforgettable As a fighter for freedom, he was illustrious, as a maker of modern India his services were unparalleled His life and work have had a profound influence on our mental makeup, social structures and intellectual development It is difficult to reconcile ourselves to the image of India without Nehru's active and pervasive leadership An epoch of our country's history has come to a close

A New History of India is more of a historic treatise than a normal book of history It may be the first of its kind in recent years It is both authentic and authoritative and the text follows the most important guideline for writing history in an objective manner free from partisanship or prejudice It also gives a panoramic view of the contribution of India in the political and cultural history of the region covering Central Asia and across the sea to South-East Asia

The book is not only designed to cater to the requirement of scholars and students but it is useful to all who have a keen interest in studying history A unique feature of this book is the exhaustive bibliography at the end of each part Cartographic representations of important periods of history have also been given at the end of each part of the book ■

Reforming the United Nations: Exaggerated Preoccupation

M.S. RAJAN

The demand for revising the UN Charter and reforming the United Nations is very old—for almost 50 years, even during the Cold War years, it has been raised The reasons for not being able to carry out major changes in the Charter are fairly obvious One that is not so obvious, but is perfectly legitimate, is that since the Charter came into existence in 1945 (when the UN membership was just 51) more than two-thirds of the present membership (185) have had no hand in its formulation While, therefore, the demand for formal reform is reasonable, it seems impracticable for the foreseeable future Primarily, it is because it calls for a consensus (and approval) of at least two-thirds of the membership, including especially the five permanent members (as required by the relevant provisions of the Charter)

The author is a Professor Emeritus of International Organisation, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

So far, there have been only three formal amendments to the Charter (in the 1960s and 1970s) mainly concerning the increase of the non-permanent membership of the Security Council from six to 10, and of the Economic and Social Council from 18 to the present 54 Many other changes in the Charter (and the organisation) are desirable, but have not been practicable, despite tremendous efforts over many years There were some hopes during the Cold War years (until the late 1980s) that some of them at least would be possible at the end of the Cold War This has not, in fact, been possible, despite accelerated efforts since then, largely because there has been no consensus among the majority of members (including the permanent members) about specific proposals

While this situation is deplorable, there is no need at all for frustration. After all, while the United Nations is based on a multilateral treaty, the Charter, which can be altered only by formal amendments, is also the Constitution of a functioning international organisation In respect of the latter form, the organisation/Charter can be altered (and *has been* altered) by a variety of ways, other than by formal amendments Indeed, the organisation/Charter have undergone three revolutionary changes, without any formal decisions of even recognition (a) from a non-aligned organisation in 1945 (against the "ex-enemy state") to an actually "non-aligned" organisation of all sovereign states (including the "ex-enemy states"), (b) from an organisation of limited, restrictive membership, to one of universal, non-exclusive organisation of all states, (c) from essentially a "European" organisation in 1945 to a genuinely global one presently

Beyond these subtle, but revolutionary, changes, both the organisation and the Charter have been "changed", without any formal amendments These have happened by implicit, informal procedures or understandings

Thus, the members and the organisation have permitted universal membership, ignoring the restrictive criteria of eligibility in the Charter for membership Secondly, the harshness of the operation of the great power veto in the Security Council (under Article 27) has been considerably reduced by the well-established convention that the absence or abstention (or non-voting) of a permanent member, does not constitute a veto. Similarly, the United Nations has managed to function so far, despite the non-implementation of the provision under Article 43 which provides for special agreements by which the members would make available to the Security Council armed forces and facilities for the purpose of maintaining international peace and security. Thirdly, the organisation has invented the creation of "peace-keeping forces" for which there is no provision at all in the Charter

The organisation has also made many supplementary agreements or arrangements for discharging its purposes

By another method the organisation has also adapted itself by interpretation of the Charter provisions, as also by the doctrine of "implied powers" in many ways. Perhaps the best example is the fact that the "domestic jurisdiction" provision (Article 27) does not apply to the question of self-determination of colonial peoples or to human rights among member-states It is also open to the organisation (under the so-called "Uniting for Peace' resolution of November 1950) when the Security Council is paralysed by the use of the veto by a permanent member to transfer an item by a procedural vote to the General Assembly (where no veto prevails). The organisation has also sought and accepted in many cases the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the interpretation of the provisions of the Charter

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FROM all this it is clear that the world organisation is fully capable of adapting itself to continually changing international context and the needs of at least a large majority of members, without necessarily the need for formal textual changes in the Charter Indeed, there is no reason to think that the potentialities of the organisation in this respect have been exhausted, necessitating formal amendments or decisions. In fact, this is the secret of the survival of the United Nations all these 52 years, and even, what is extraordinary, despite the four decade old Cold War period

It does seem, therefore, that the tremendous efforts for years by the members, by the committees of the organisation, by private individuals and non-governmental orgnisations towards revising the Charter and altering the organisation and its functions, are not worth the marginal results so far achieved On the other hand, the informal procedural "changes" and understandings of at least the majority (as indicated briefly above) are a potential source and methods for changing the terms of the Charter or the manner of functioning of the United Nations

This does not mean that the efforts for formal changes or amendments need to be entirely given up. Only the great efforts being made for years, individually or collectively, need to be lowered to save time, energy and unduly high expectations of changes, in the short run, of the organisation. This is likely to have an impact on the possibility of informal changes later on.

This is certainly true of the present, ongoing, hopes of some states (including India) to be made permanent members of the Security Council. There is little chance of this happening in the foreseeable future—thanks to the vested interests of the existing five permanent members, sadly, including Russia and China ■

CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS (FEBRUARY 8-14, 1998)

NATIONAL

February 8

- Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray tells reporters at Nagpur that if the BJP came to power he would press for a constitutional amendment to bar Mrs Sonia Gandhi from becoming the Prime Minister
- Addressing a Congress election rally at Pratapgarh, Mrs Sonia Gandhi says she has nothing to lose and does not want to gain anything for herself
- Election Commission debars UP Minister Raghuraj Pratap Singh from entering Pratapgarh till the end of the Lok Sabha elections saying that his presence would create a serious law and order problem
- Congress leader and former Finance Minister Manmohan Singh tells *The Asian Age* in an interview in New Delhi that the real BJP is controlled by the RSS
- BJP Prime Ministerial candidate Atal Behari Vajpayee at a Ludhiana meeting directly accuses Rajiv Gandhi of receiving kickbacks in the Bofors deal and says having swallowed so much money he must have told (Sonia Gandhi) something, must have given some hint where the money has gone

February 9

- US-based Indian scientist Krishna R. Dronamraju, President of the Foundation for Genetic Research, Houston and a member of the Hillary Clinton Panel on Health Care, says in New Delhi "The CIA is opposed to technology to India They see India as a potential threat "
- Speaking at Navapachi village in Doda district of J & K, Prime Minister I K Gujral says Pakistan is not bothered about the welfare of the Kashmiri people They want Kashmir for its scenic beauty and strategic importance
- International Labour Organisation (ILO) starts a programme in Jalandhar to rehabilitate children working in the famous sports industry of the town
- Election Commission postpones till June the parliamentary elections in Ladakh and Mandi constituencies and Assembly elections in Lahaul Spiti, Kinnaur and Bharmour in Himachal Pradesh in view of the prevailing weather conditions

February 10

- CPI-M General Secretary Harkishan Singh Surjeet criticises the BJP for its media manoeuvring and its latest ploy to portray the elections as a battle between the Congress and the BJP and to make the voters think that the United Front was out of the picture
- Sir VS Naipaul, the well-known writer, born in Trinidad of Indian origin, visits the famed Jagannath temple in Puri (Orissa) and says he is appalled at the dust and dirt and pariah dogs
- Three persons are injured when police open fire to quell violence between two groups of commuters at Patna Saheb railway station The rival groups fight with sticks and brickbats to assert their right to first enter a train
- Board of Control for Cricket in India sues test cricketer Manoj Prabhakar and the weekly *Outlook* for Rs 5 crores in damages claiming that his charges of bribery and match fixing were "baseless and false and harmed the reputation of the game and Indian cricketers, in particular"

February 11

- Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Dr Farooq Abdullah, participating in a panel discussion on a private TV channel, warns the BJP that any attempt to abrogate Article 370 of the Constitution would cause not only a revolt but the "total division of India"
- Suspected ULFA rebels shoot dead at Naharoni village in upper Assam's Naharkatiya the CPI-ML (Liberation) candidate, Anil Baruah, contesting from Dibrugarh In another incident suspected ULFA militants shoot at and injure Assam Cabinet Minister and Vice-President of Asom Gana Parishad, Brij Kumar Sharma, in the centre of Guwahati One of his guards is killed in the attack
- Trinamul Congress leader Mamata Banerjee tells a rally in Calcutta that she has seat adjustments with the BJP "I don't want to hide this fact from you," she says
- Punjab police apprehends two International Sikh Youth Federation militants in Jalandhar who are believed to be a part of the conspiracy to assassinate senior political leaders including Prime Minister I K Gujral and Mrs Sonia Gandhi
- In a major combined services operation; Indian armed forces kill at least six members of an international gang of gunrunners and capture 74 others with a large caché of sophisticated weapons in Andaman and Nicobar Islands

February 12

- Chief Election Commissioner Dr M S Gill rules out any change in the scheduled February 16 parliamentary elections in Assam The Assam Government decides to rope in retired policemen to augment the security forces deployed in view of the ULFA and Bodo militants' threat to disrupt the polls
- National Liberation Front of Tripura insurgents kill seven jawans of Tripura State Rifles (TSR) and 12 non-tribals and make a bid on the life of a BJP Assembly candidate in three overnight attacks
- BJP central election office spokesman and the party's Punjab unit Vice-President, B L Rinwa, says "the Jalandhar unit of the BJP has been fully authorised to ensure the crushing defeat of the Congress" and is thus extending support to Prime Minister I K Gujral
- Union Government announces that it proposes to approach the United States patent office for re-examination of the patent given to the American company Ricetec for Basmati rice
- Veteran freedom fighter Radhanath Rath, the oldest working editor of the country, passes away Editor of the largest circulation Oriya daily *Samaj*, since 1946 Rath was 101

February 13

- BJP President L K Advani alleges at a press conference in Chandigarh that Mrs Sonia Gandhi was still holding an Italian passport He suggests that, like in the US, only Indians by birth should hold key positions in the country on security grounds.
- Mrs Sonia Gandhi, addressing a rally in Delhi, says Atal Behari Vajpayee was lying when he said that her husband Rajiv Gandhi had taken commission in the Bofors deal
- Former Congress Union Minister K C Pant formally joins the BJP and calls for installing a strong, stable and clean government at the Centre ending the "tentative experiment with rickety coalition governments"
- Allahabad High Court sets aside the Election Commission's directive to UP Minister Raghuraj Pratap Singh not to enter Pratapgarh till the end of the elections, saying the EC has no such authority But the Minister is advised to keep away from his home district

February 14

- Thirtythree persons, including three women and a child, are killed and more than 150 are injured in a series of bomb blasts in Coimbatore minutes before the arrival of BJP President L K Advani to address an election rally Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M Karunanidhi suspects it to be the handiwork of foreign agencies and bans two fundamentalist Muslim outfits, Al Umma and Jehad
- UNI quotes L K Advani saying at Tiruchirapalli that he was informed by a top police official that they chased a suspect who proved to be a human bomb and blew himself up in a bylane However, the Director General of Police says there was no evidence of a human bomb

INTERNATIONAL

February 8

- Saudi Arabia declares its opposition to a military strike against Iraq even as the US and Britain assemble a formidable force in the region and threaten to force Iraq to open disputed sites for arms inspection
- Iranian journalist Morteza Firoozi, editor of the English language *Iran News*, accused of spying for three unidentified countries, is to be executed as the Supreme Court upholds the death sentence
- Cloud bursts and storms drench northern California cutting power supply to thousands of customers and stopping commuter trains, while heavy snow in West Virginia causes black out and disruption in transport services
- Former First Lady of Philippines Imelda Marcos, widow of the dictator Ferdinand Marcos, files her candidacy papers for the Presidential election in May next

February 9

- Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, on a visit to Pakistan, says at a news conference in Islamabad "We want to promote a nuclear free world If not contained the problem will have a destabilising effect" He urges India and Pakistan to sign the NPT and CTBT
- Food and anti-price rise riots in eastern Java island of Indonesia turn into ethnic attacks on the Chinese houses and shops
- Flash floods hit the Mexican border city of Tijuana after a series of El-Nino inflicted heavy rains Authorities estimate some 10,000 residents became homeless and 14 persons lost their lives
- Christian Solidarity International reports from Madhol (Sudan) that slave trade is still flourishing in the civil war torn African country
- US Defence Secretary William Cohen, on his way to Saudi Arabia, tells reporters aboard his plane that he was not going to seek Saudi permission for attack on Iraq Kuwait and Bahrain were willing to let the US launch its attack from their soil, he says

February 10

- Pakistan President Rafique Tarar signs his assent to the controversial Contempt of Court Amendment Bill 1997 which lays down that the Prime Minister of the country cannot be hauled for Contempt of Court Law Minister Khalid Anwar says some more amendments would be introduced later to the law which former President Farooq Leghari had refused to sign and resigned on the issue
- British House of Lords votes 121 to 93 to amend a bill to end "predatory pricing" in newspapers as "ruthless undercutting" in the price of *The Times*, owned by press baron Rupert Murdoch, threatens the survival of *The Independent* and other papers
- Arab League Secretary-General Esmat Abdel Meguid announces at a press conference in Cairo that Iraq was ready to allow UN arms inspectors access to 68 Presidential sites for two months
- Khan Abdul Wali Khan, chief of the Awami National Party of Pakistan, gives his party permission to pull out of the coalition governments in the NWFP and at the Centre and to snap ties with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's ruling Pakistan Muslim League
- Georgian President Eduard Shevarnadze, formerly Foreign Minister of the demised Soviet Union, escapes assassination on his life in Tbilisi when 10-15 gunmen open fire on his motorcade and kill two of his guards while one of the attackers is killed in return fire

February 11

- Lahore daily *The News* reports that Pakistan has developed a surface-to-surface missile with a target range of 1500 km which will be tested in three stages within the next three weeks in the presence of the President, the Prime Minister and the chiefs of armed forces
- Pakistan sets up a police training school in Lahore to raise an elite force to combat sectarian violence in Punjab, the largest province of the country
- Business leaders, policy-makers and former US Presidents launch a media campaign urging the Congress to approve payments of $18 billion to the International Monetary Fund and the back dues to the UN Beginning with full page ads in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* and the Capitol Hill newspaper *Roll Call*, Jimmy Carter, Gerald Ford, Henry Kissinger, Alexander Haig, Michael Blumenthal, Lloyd Bentsen and others warn that non-payment causing financial crises in Asia could cut US growth and leave a trade deficit of $300 billion

y 12
- First Vice-President of Sudan Gen. Al-Zubair Mohammad Saleh and Information Minister Gen Ibrahim Mohammed Khair are killed in a plane crash in the Upper Nile State
- Former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto accuses Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif of setting aside Rs 1 20 crore for conducting the trial of the Opposition through the media
- Malaysian Minister for Science, Technology and Environment Law Hieng Ding says the Malaysian water supply is likely to dwindle in the next few months The dry period, he says, is expected to last till May and the rainfall may be reduced to 50 per cent
- Russian Defence Minister Igor Sergeyev says the Iraq crisis affects vital interests of Russia and warns the USA that its military strike against Baghdad would hurt US-Russian military cooperation

y 13
- US President Bill Clinton maintains his tough stand on Iraq and says "We don't believe it is acceptable if diplomacy fails to walk away"
- Twentytwo US Congressmen ask President Clinton to impose "tough economic sanctions" against India if it did not allow the Amnesty International and other human rights watch groups to visit the country
- Mexico City, the capital of Mexico, is sinking at a rate of 45 centimetres a year as the water-table is drained to supply this megapolis of two crore people, says a report of the National Water Collection
- Indonesian cities, Pamanukan, Ciasem and Indramayu, are blaze with fresh riots as mobs take to streets looting shops and setting fire to vehicles and houses Commander of the US forces in the Pacific Admiral Joseph Prucher says the domestic instability in Indonesia could jeopardise secure passage of American warships between the American bases through the Straits of Malacca to the Gulf flashpoint

ary 14
- Food riots in West Java erupt in frenzied killing, looting, burning churches, houses, shops, mainly of ethnic Chinese The deployment of 35,000 troops seems to have no effect Local Chinese seek shelter in military and police establishments
- South-East Asia panics again as fresh forest fire breaks out in Indonesia with dense rise of smoke from Kalimantan and Sumatra
- Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, on a visit to China, unleashes a tirade against India which he says is building a massive military machine to exercise hegemony in South Asia ■

COMMUNICATION

ppeal to Political Parties falls on Deaf Ears

d written an open letter to some major political s, some of whom do not, academically speaking, y the criteria "of a political party" or of a party nitted to real social work

y question to them was are you all willing to ne Lok Sabha constituency to this writer along- active support leading to his election as an pendent supported by all political parties? None em responded positively I prepared a pamphlet ngali and myself distributed it at Jadavpur Lok a constituency, Calcutta (including its farthest er) in early January 1998.

At this moment, I cannot spend one man's petty (when compared with Election Commission's approved permission of Rs 12 lakhs' spending) life-savings and contest the election alone Yet, a genuine scientific person is bound to be an adventurist in order to be a discoverer or an inventor or an innovator at the least At the right time and at the right place, I shall contest and win with people's support

The refusal by all political parties to learn the real meaning of "economic development" and act accordingly* and that in spite of vigorous persuasion of a socially committed academic person, had compelled me to try to enter the Lok Sabha and convince everyone

Now, who refuses to learn?+ Is it not a fact that all political parties without exception have eulogised and pursued the present economic policy for the last 10 to 15 years and since 1991 in particular? One can just count the days or months at the most when all political parties without exception shall have to prostrate before the "people" (following our custom) and apologise for harming the people and the country (Note This writer has no personal animosity with any political party)

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Subrata Lahiry
(Professor)

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e effort was started by the writer from 1985 onwards rand American Strategy etc, *Organiser,* July 28, 1991, an pen letter to the Prime Minister (could not be published nywhere in a democratic country) was sent to the then M, PV Narasimha Rao on October end, 1991, letter to MF Managing Director, *Mainstream,* February 15, 1992 ll these and many more are now documented in my ook "Liberalisation and Globalisation—When and Where", 996, Jawahar Publishers, Ber-Sarai (opp JNU old ampus), New Delhi-16

et me illustrate Boys and girls master the technique of rapeze game in circus and become players, while jokers o not master and only try to mimick the same and emain jokers Since 1947, only jokers have been encouraged n every field of activity, namely, science, engineering, echnology, politics, economics, to mention a few

Posted at CPSO in New Delhi on February 20/21, 1998 **Delhi Postal REGD No DL-**
Licence No U-(C)-20/98 Licensed to Post without Prepayment Regd with Registrar of Newspapers of India under No RN

There's a
little bit
of SAIL
in everybody's
LIFE.

STEEL AUTHORITY OF INDIA LIMITED

Edited and published by Sumit Chakravartty *for* Perspective Publications Private Ltd, 145/1D, Shahpur Jat (First Floor
(Near Asiad Village), New Delhi-110049 *Printed at* New Delhi Printers, 20/7 Old Market, West Patel Naga
New Delhi-110008 *Editor* Sumit Chakravartty *Editorial Adviser* Nikhil Chakravartty *Manager* Jasjit Kay Nagr